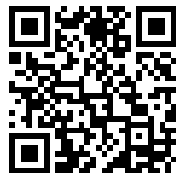

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ESSEX UNITS IN THE WAR
1914 - 1919.

4TH, 5TH, 6TH, 7TH & 8TH BATTALIONS
VOL. 5

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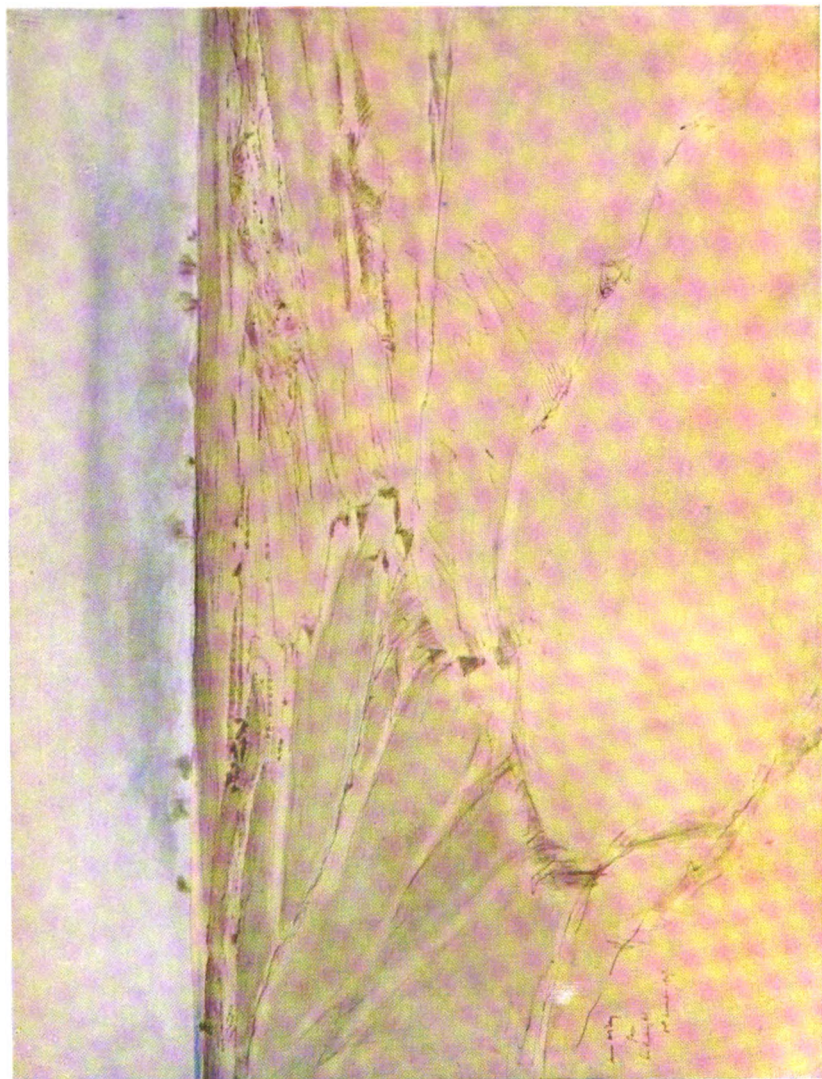
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BATTLEFIELD OF GAZA, by James McBev.

A pictorial view of the battlefield of Gaza, most famous in history. The great road to Egypt follows the darker valley stretching to the left of Gaza. The Wall of Gutzza is seen in the distance. The Philistine stronghold, the entrance to Palestine, and from time immortal invaders from Africa, including Alexander the Great and Napoleon, have camped here after the march across the Sinai Desert.

[Reproduced by permission of Imperial War Museum.]

THE ESSEX REGIMENT

**Essex Territorial Infantry Brigade,
(4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions).**

Also 8th (Cyclists) Battalion The Essex Regiment.

**BY
JOHN W^M. BURROWS, F.S.A.**

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*Published by arrangement with the Essex Territorial Army
Association.*



**Southend-on-Sea:
JOHN H. BURROWS & SONS, LTD.**

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THE LORD LIEUTENANT OF ESSEX (Brig.-Gen. R. B. Colvin, C.B.)

FOREWORD.

I GLADLY avail myself of the author's request to write a foreword to his fifth volume, containing the History of the Essex Volunteers, their transition to the Territorial Force and later to the 161st Brigade of the 54th East Anglian Division, and also the 8th Cyclist Battalion. It gives me the opportunity to express my most heartfelt thanks to the author for having so generously undertaken the compilation of such a vast, valuable and comprehensive work.

When, at the termination of the war, emergency units were rapidly being disbanded, it was realized that unless prompt measures were taken, the records of these gallant corps were in danger of being lost, and that the responsibility of preserving them rested primarily with the Essex Territorial Force Association as it was then styled. It was, consequently, decided that steps should be taken so that the history of each Essex unit that participated in any way in the Great War should be obtained and compiled for transmission to posterity.

The first attempt in this direction unfortunately resulted in an expensive failure, and it was when the Committee were at their wits' end how to proceed that Mr. John Wm. Burrows, of Southend-on-Sea, came to the rescue and magnanimously undertook the compilation of the history, the production of which has already occupied him ten years, while there are still more volumes awaiting completion.

This volume, dealing with the services of the Essex Infantry Brigade, the largest Territorial unit in the county, must necessarily be of exceptional interest, while the personal narratives which the author has so wisely inserted clearly reveal the spirit and determination which inspired all ranks at all times in these memorable years.

“To all the sensual world proclaim,

“One crowded hour of glorious life

“Is worth an age without a name.”

So wrote Sir Walter Scott, and there must be few in the full enjoyment of youth to whom these lines do not appeal, though there may be many, who, when experiencing the “glorious life,” would only be too willing to exchange it for the alternative. Be that as it may, those who served this Country in the Great War have contributed to a history which redounds to the credit of the nation.

As the narrative discloses the heroism and endurance of men from every section of society, it must be conceded that the call to arms produced acts of valour from individuals which, in the ordinary routine of life, might never have been displayed or even contemplated.

The narrative of the Essex Infantry Brigade confirms, too, what had been proved elsewhere, viz., the merits of the civilian soldier concerning whose reliability doubts had previously been expressed, and it can only be hoped that successive Governments, realizing the value of the Territorial Army, will deal generously with those who undertake a training in peace time which will enable them to respond in time of emergency to their country's call.

The annual training of the Essex Infantry Brigade was scarcely completed when war was declared in August, 1914. Mobilization immediately followed, then came a year's training with the Home Defence Force in Norfolk and elsewhere, and in July, 1915, the Brigade found itself on the high seas, bound for Gallipoli, an integral part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

Fortunately for the Brigade, the Army had already established itself in the Peninsula, but, nevertheless, the 161st Brigade received their baptism of fire soon after their disembarkation at Suvla Bay. For three months they shared in all the dangers and trials of the ill-fated expedition, from which the Brigade was withdrawn in an exhausted condition in December, 1915, shortly before the general evacuation, in order that it might be utilized in the operations then taking place against the Senussi. The Brigade was stationed in the Libyan Desert on the line of communications west of Alexandria. This campaign terminated in March, 1916.

After a month's training in close proximity to the Pyramids, the Brigade was employed for a further period of ten months on the defences of the Suez Canal, a welcome and necessary respite after its arduous experiences in Gallipoli, but also a time of constant activities in very trying conditions of temperature and sand.

Thus, in January, 1917, when plans were matured for a general advance in Palestine, the Essex Infantry Brigade emerged a well-seasoned, highly-trained and experienced force, to take a prominent part in General Allenby's spectacular victory. The march from Egypt to Palestine, from Cairo to Gaza, through the deep sands of the desert, by a route that had been trodden by countless armies in bygone ages and which occupied a month, was, in itself, a great achievement.

Then followed the three attacks on Gaza commencing in March, 1917, and terminating in its capture in November, 1917. This proved to be the most formidable undertaking in which the 161st Brigade were engaged; it was here that the greatest losses in the war were sustained, and it was here that the Brigade crowned its successes by earning for the Essex Regiment the proud battle honour borne on the King's Colour, "Gaza." With the fall of Gaza General Allenby started on his road to victory. The enemy still held their ground, tenaciously disputing the passage of the Ajja and onwards till Majdal Yaba was reached in March, 1918. The last general engagement in which the Brigade took part was the very important battle near the Plain

of Sharon. This victory enabled the cavalry to break through and encircle the enemy, the decisive action of this war, resulting in the "General Chase," in which the 161st Brigade participated. By November, 1918, the Brigade had reached Beirut, where the news of the surrender of the Turkish Army was received.

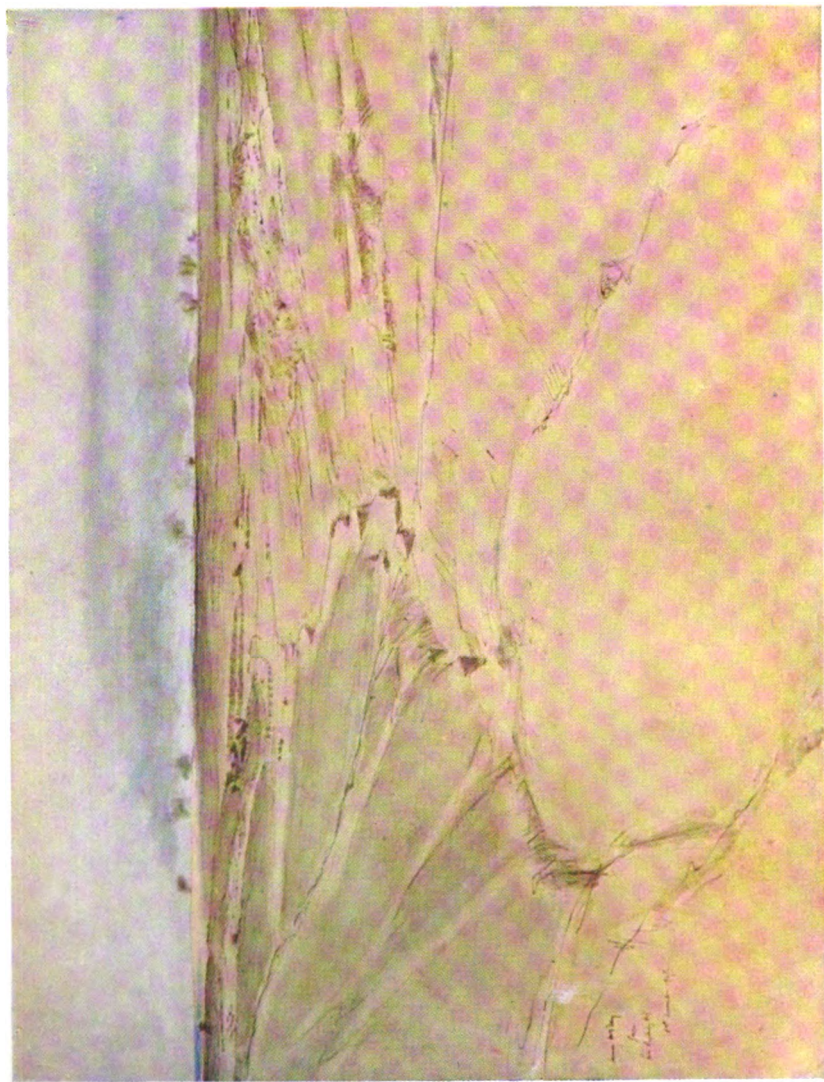
After a short rest the Brigade returned to Egypt, but it was many weary months before its services there could be dispensed with, and it was not till November, 1919, that the last remnants of the Brigade were restored to their homes, to receive the welcome they so richly deserved and the grateful thanks of their country for the noble manner in which they had sustained and enhanced the military reputation which our Essex soldiers have ever enjoyed.

I must conclude with a short reference to the 8th Cyclist Battalion whose records are also included in this Volume, and who suffered the greatest disappointment in that their services as a unit were not utilized overseas.

The 8th Cyclist Battalion justly prided themselves on being a modern military development, an up-to-date unit, one of the most efficient Battalions that the Essex Territorial Force Association had produced. They were, at the outbreak of war, at once allotted the difficult and arduous task of watching the Essex Coast, which service was carried out in a most complete and effective manner. It has been suggested that a division of cyclists would have been of immense value in the early days of the war in prolonging our line and guarding the left flank of our army in France. That may or may not be the case, but all those who watched with pride and satisfaction the development of this new unit, do share in the great disappointment that such an efficient corps should have been broken up and its personnel distributed among other units. The epitaph of the Cyclist Battalion must be, "They did their duty and did it well."



Monkhams,
March, 1932.



BATTLEFIELD OF GAZA, by James McBey.

A panoramic view of the battlefield of Gaza, most famous in history. The great road to Egypt follows the darker valley stretching to the left of Gaza. The Wadi Ghuzzee lies across the middle distance, and part of it is seen at the end of the ravine. The Philistine stronghold marks the entrance to Palestine, and from time immemorial invaders from Africa, including Alexander the Great and Napoleon, have camped here after the march across the Sinai Desert. [Reproduced by permission of Imperial War Museum.]

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE writing of the fifth volume of the history of Essex units, that of the County Territorial Infantry, constituting the 161st Brigade of the 54th Division, has been a task of some difficulty and labour. As the four battalions—4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Essex—served together as one brigade, it was essential to prevent unnecessary repetition of the main details of the war story, and in order to do so, it was decided to present the narrative in one volume. The adoption of this form has, however, the disadvantage that the story may seem to be, to some extent, disconnected. To secure clarity, the general outline of the particular phase of a campaign or of a battle has been given, followed by a description of the part played by the 54th Division, then that of the Brigade, the narrative of each of the four Battalions in numerical order, and, finally, that of the Machine Gun Company. The writer gladly pays tribute to the very great and cordial assistance which he has unstintingly received from officers and other ranks. Here and there, the response has been disappointing, but, on the whole, no one could have wished for happier or more pleasant relationships, and if this volume fails to convey, fully and readably, the momentous story of our Territorial Infantry, then the fault lies with the writer and not with the legion of those, who, in addition to playing a gallant part, strove their best to secure that the information required was forthcoming in full and accurate measure.

From the former commander of the Brigade (Colonel Sir Carne Rasch, Bart.) and commanding officers of the Battalions (4th, Lieut.-Colonel J. L. French; 5th, Lieut.-Colonel C. Portway, M.C.; 6th, Lieut.-Colonel C. A. Baily, O.B.E., and 7th, Lieut.-Colonel F. R. Waller), the writer has had all possible assistance, and, in addition, valuable help has been also given by former commanding officers, including Colonels Frank Landon, C. H. R. Taylor, O.B.E., T. Gibbons, D.S.O., Barrington Wells, D.S.O., E. A. Loftus, O.B.E., G. Shenstone, A. R. Meggy and R. F. Wall. The late Brig.-General W. Marriott-Dodington, C.M.G., who commanded the 161st Brigade during the three Battles of Gaza and the crossing of the Auja, has been most helpful. He forwarded his comments on each of these engagements and also carefully revised the Press proofs. Colonel Harry Cooper, C.M.G., who commanded the Brigade from 1906 to 1911, has also forwarded his recollection of that important formative period. Others who deserve special recognition include Majors W. E. Wilson, D.S.O., Clive Needell, M.C., J. N. Coker, M.C., Carlyon Hughes, H. T. Argent, D. Kenyon Taylor, M.B.E., Captains L. F. Bittles, M.C., J. F. Finn, M.C., C. W. Silverwood, P. H.

Turner, P. W. Scott, A. Colvin (now Rector of Willingale Spain and Willingale Doe), J. W. H. T. Dickie, M.C., Bernard Keen, R. V. Hosking and Lieut. W. F. Cook. They have been untiring in their assistance. Not only have they contributed their impressions of active service and incidents illustrative of the nature of the warfare, but they have also sought out others and stimulated them to epistolary zeal. Without them the book could not have been written. Special thanks are also due to C.S.M. F. J. Rolph, D.C.M., and Sergeant W. White. This preface would not be complete without an acknowledgment of the help which came from Colonel Gibbons' notable and widely-read volume, "With the 1/5th Essex in the East."

It may be that in respect of some of the battles and incidents described there will be a feeling more space is given to one battalion than to another. Every effort has been made to avoid such a criticism, but, if it may so appear, the writer would ask the kindly consideration of the reader and point out that the experience of one battalion was, in fact, but that of another. All played their part with equal gallantry and devotion and it has not been desired to single out one more than another.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Essex (Brig.-General R. B. Colvin, C.B.) has kindly written the preface and no one is better qualified to undertake that duty, for it was under his wise guidance as Chairman of the Essex Territorial Association that the County Territorial Force was recruited and administered. His unswerving support and sound advice have been ever at the service of the writer, who would also refer to the help given by the Chairman of the Essex Territorial Association (Colonel F. H. D. C. Whitmore, C.M.G., D.S.O.) and Lieut.-Colonel E. U. Bradbridge (former Secretary). Captain D. H. Burles, late Middlesex Regiment, has been again of the utmost assistance in the drawing of maps and sketches, and acknowledgment is also due to Major F. Becke, O.B.E., and Mr. E. A. Dixon, of the Historical Branch of the Committee of Imperial Defence. The whole of the unique collection of photographs taken by the Rev. B. K. Bond, M.C., C.F., have been generously placed at the writer's disposal and they have been freely used to illustrate this volume. Others have been kindly loaned by Captain J. F. Finn, Lieut. W. F. Cook, Lieut. R. E. Cook and C.S.M. Rolph, whilst important drawings and sketches have been also supplied by Captain P. W. Scott and Captain R. V. Hosking.

The war story of the 161st Brigade must become ever more precious to Essex men and women as the years pass. We were so near to the mighty conflict in France and Flanders that great "sideshowes" like those of Gallipoli and Palestine are dwarfed by comparison. Yet we must expect that in time our descendants will turn with increasing interest and respect to the deeds of the army which gloriously failed and to those of the army which gloriously conquered and entered Jerusalem, for of those armies

the Essex Territorial Infantry Brigade formed part. Their gallantry will stir imagination in days to come; quicken and deepen the spirit of devotion to the county. They were our own kith and kin and we would not forget, though immersed once again in the trials and tribulations of post-war life, that those who suffered the daily perils and discomforts of Gallipoli and Palestine must many a time have been heartsore for the sights and scenes of the old county.

Last night I lay at Good Easter
Under a hedge I knew;
Last night in wood by High Easter
I trod the may-floors blue.

* * * *

Roding, that names eight churches
(Banks with the paigles pight),
Chelmer, whose mill and willows
Keep one red tower in sight.

* * * *

Ah! I may not go back now,
Neither be turned nor stayed,
Yet should I live, I'd seek her,
Once that my vows are paid.¹

With this volume also appears the story of the 8th (Cyclist) Battalion The Essex Regiment, which, though less in extent than that of the Brigade, is of real importance, for it is the story of a unit which was among the first called to arms, but which was compelled by force of circumstances to remain in this country. The personnel was, however, drafted to battalions serving in France, Palestine and other spheres of operations, where it played a very creditable part. The writer acknowledges the great assistance which has been received from Colonel J. C. Tabor, Colonel T. J. Boulter, Major H. J. Young and other officers.

JOHN WM. BURROWS.

1. Arthur Shirley Cripps.



Commemorative Panel to the Essex Regt. in Braintree Town Hall.

THE ESSEX REGIMENT.

1st (44th, EAST ESSEX), 2nd (56th, WEST ESSEX), 3rd (ESSEX (RIFLES) MILITIA), 4th (T.), 5th (T.), 6th (T.) and 7th (T.) BATTALIONS.

BATTLE HONOURS.

Borne upon the King's Colour : " Le Cateau, " " Marne, 1914, " " Ypres, 1915, 1917, " " Loos, " " Somme, 1916, 1918, " " Arras, 1917, 1918, " " Cambrai, 1917, 1918, " " Selle, " " Gallipoli, 1915-16, " " Gaza. "

Borne upon the Regimental Colour : The Castle and Key, superscribed Gibraltar, 1779-82, and with the motto *Montis Insignia Calpe* underneath (2nd Bn.). The Sphinx, superscribed " Egypt " (1st Bn.). An Eagle (1st Bn.). " Moro " (2nd Bn.), " Havannah " (2nd Bn.), " Badajos " (1st Bn.), " Salamanca " (1st Bn.), " Peninsula " (1st Bn.), " Bladensburg " (1st Bn.), " Waterloo " (1st Bn.), " Ava " (1st Bn.), " Alma " (1st Bn.), " Inkerman " (1st Bn.), " Sevastopol " (1st and 2nd Bns.), " Taku Forts " (1st Bn.), " Nile, 1884-5 " (2nd Bn.), " Relief of Kimberley " (1st Bn.), " Paardeberg " (1st Bn.), " South Africa, 1899-02 " (1st and 2nd Bns.)

The full list allowed for the War 1914-1919 was as follows : " Le Cateau, " " Retreat from Mons, " " Marne, 1914, " " Aisne, 1914, " " Messines, 1914, " " Armentières, 1914, " " Ypres, 1915, 1917, " " St. Julien, " " Frezenberg, " " Bellewaarde, " " Loos, " " Somme, 1916, 1918, " " Albert, 1916, 1918, " " Bazentin, " " Delville Wood, " " Pozieres, " " Flers-Courcelette, " " Morval, " " Thiepval, " " Le Transloy, " " Ancre Heights, " " Ancre, 1916, 1918, " " Bapaume, 1917, 1918, " " Arras, 1917, 1918, " " Scarpe, 1917, 1918, " " Arleux, " " Pilckem, " " Langemarck, 1917, " " Menin Road, " " Broodseinde, " " Poelcappelle, " " Passchendaele, " " Cambrai, 1917, 1918, " " St. Quentin, " " Avre, " " Villers-Bretonneux, " " Lys, " " Hazebrouck, " " Béthune, " " Amiens, " " Drocourt-Quéant, " " Hindenburg Line, " " Havrincourt, " " Epéhy, " " St. Quentin Canal, " " Selle, " " Sambre, " " France and Flanders, 1914-1918, " " Helles, " " Landing at Helles, " " Krithia, " " Suvla, " " Landing at Suvla, " " Scimitar Hill, " " Gallipoli, 1915-16, " " Rumani, " " Egypt, 1915-17, " " Gaza, " " Jaffa, " " Megiddo, " " Sharon, " " Palestine, 1917-18. "

1. Honours for service in South Africa were also earned by the 3rd Battalion, which went to South Africa in 1902, and by the four Essex Volunteer Battalions, later known as 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Territorial Battalions, 161st Brigade, 54th Division. They contributed special service companies to the 1st Battalion and also detachments to the City Imperial Volunteers, a regiment raised by the City of London for the South African War.

All the honours emblazoned upon the King's Colour were won in the war of 1914-1919. Eleven battalions of the Essex Regiment served overseas in that great campaign. They were: 1st, 2nd, 4th (T.), 5th (T.), 6th (T.), 7th (T.), 9th (S.), 10th (S.), 11th (S.), 13th (S.) and 15th (S.). The 1st and 2nd Garrison Battalions of the Essex Regiment also did duty abroad. Members of the Regiment who were killed in action, died of wounds or died of disease numbered 8,209, distributed as follows: 1st Battalion, 1,787; 2nd Battalion, 1,457; 4th Battalion, 445; 5th Battalion, 331; 6th Battalion, 270; 7th Battalion, 305; 9th Battalion, 1,044; 10th Battalion, 1,014; 11th Battalion, 957; 13th Battalion, 575; 15th Battalion, 24. The 2nd Battalion was present at Le Cateau, August 26th, 1914, and was the first unit of the Essex Regiment to be actively employed. Again, as part of the 12th Brigade, the 2nd Battalion forced the passage of the Marne at the barrage near La Ferte in September, 1914, and was also employed in the battles of St. Julien, Frezenberg Ridge and Bellewarde Ridge, constituting the group "Ypres, 1915," and for its services there the Battalion was three times mentioned in despatches by Earl French of Ypres, the British Commander-in-Chief. In the series of encounters in the Ypres Salient, 1917, the 1st, 2nd and 10th Battalions were heavily engaged. At Loos, 1915, when the newly raised Service battalions were first under fire, the 9th and 11th Battalions fought with heavy losses, whilst in battles of the Somme, 1916, the 1st, 2nd, 9th, 10th, 11th and 13th Battalions—all the Essex infantry units in France at that time—were frequently in action. Again in 1918, in the battles of the same area, five of the battalions (the 13th had been disbanded) were involved, struggling against the German offensive and then, with depleted numbers, turning and driving back the enemy armies. It was at Arras that the 2nd Battalion specially distinguished itself, with the rest of the 4th Division, in the critical fighting of March 28th. The 1st, 2nd, 9th, 10th and 13th Battalions were present at the successful offensive from Arras in 1917, the 1st Battalion, with the Newfoundlanders, being specially proud of the part it played in operations subsequent to the capture of Monchy-le-Preux, when the 1st Essex alone sustained 600 casualties. In the hard fighting in the same area in 1918 the 2nd Battalion was present, for it was engaged in the battle of Drocourt-Quéant, when, in co-operation with Dominion troops, a successful attack was delivered over a wide belt of heavily wired and entrenched country. Sir Jocelyn Byng's army for the operations in November, 1917, known as the Battle of Cambrai, included the 1st, 9th, 11th and 13th Battalions, of which the 1st and 13th were prominent in holding up the German counter-attack. One company of the 13th, though isolated, refused to give ground and held on until all its ammunition was exhausted. The warfare in the Cambrai area in 1918 was participated in by the 1st Battalion and was notable

for the over-running of the Hindenburg Line. The series of operations which culminated in the collapse of the German armies is represented by "Selle" and in this advance to victory the 1st, 9th, 10th and 11th Battalions bore a part. The 15th Battalion, landing on May 6th, 1918, advanced with the First Army and was at Grand Rejet, near Toufflers, in the Roubaix area, when hostilities ceased. "Gallipoli, 1915," was earned by the 1st Battalion, which fought throughout this expedition, from the landing on "W" Beach in April, 1915, to the withdrawal in January, 1916. The Essex Infantry Brigade (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions) took part in the Suvla Bay operations with the 1st Battalion and also won the honour "Gaza," which covers the three actions fought before this city in Palestine was captured in November, 1917.

During the campaign the battalions were attached as follow : 1st Battalion—88th Brigade, 29th Division, and later 112th Brigade, 87th Division; 2nd Battalion—12th Brigade, 4th Division; 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions—161st Brigade, 54th (East Anglian) Division; 9th Battalion—35th Brigade, 12th Division; 10th Battalion—53rd Brigade, 18th Division; 11th Battalion—71st Brigade, 24th Division, later 18th Brigade, 6th Division; 13th Battalion—6th Brigade, 2nd Division; 15th Battalion—177th Brigade, 59th Division.

ESSEX REGIMENT CHAPEL.

On March 1st, 1925, on the recommendation of Major-General Ventris, then Colonel of the Regiment, and with the sanction of the Army Council—during the period of command of the Depot of Major R. N. Thompson and the chaplaincy of Rev. A. J. Wilcox—the Garrison Church at Warley, near Brentwood, was dedicated as the Essex Regiment Chapel by the Chaplain General of the Forces (Bishop Taylor Smith). Upon this occasion also the colours of the 10th and 11th (Service) Battalions and the 1st and 2nd Garrison Battalions of The Essex Regiment were received for safe custody. The day was further memorable in that the colours of the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions, emblazoned with war honours, were all carried on parade. The Lord-Lieutenant of Essex (Lord Lambourne) was present at the service and subsequently addressed the troops. Other colours hung in the Church are those of the 1st Battalion (44th), known as the Crimean colours, 2nd Battalion (56th), carried from 1826 to 1864, the 3rd (Special Reserve) Battalion, the 15th (Service) Battalion, 4th (West Essex Militia) Battalion, and the 5th Battalion Essex Local Militia. The colours of the 44th were originally deposited in St. Peter's Church, Colchester, and they were handed back to the custody of the Battalion in July, 1928, who, in turn, placed them in the Chapel on May 26th, 1929. They were received by the Bishop of Chelmsford (Dr. H. A. Wilson). The emblems of the 3rd (S.R.) Battalion were transferred from Harwich Church and handed over by the

Lord-Lieutenant to the Bishop of Chelmsford (Dr. Guy Warman) on October 31st, 1926. In May, 1927, the colours of the 9th (Service) Battalion, which had been presented by the Prince of Wales in France in December, 1918, were deposited by the then Colonel of the Regiment (Major-General F. Ventris, C.B.) The sermon on that occasion was preached by Rev. H. P. Berkeley, M.C., formerly Chaplain of the 12th Division, of which the 9th Battalion formed part. The celebrated Waterloo Colours of the 44th, hitherto in the custody of the 1st Battalion, were hung in the Church in June, 1931. The fragment of the King's Colour which was torn away by the French lancer at Quatre Bras has been retained at the Officers' Mess of the Battalion. The building also contains the following memorials: To Major-General Hay, who commanded at Warley when it was the depot of the East India Company; to those of the 2nd Essex who lost their lives in Egypt and the Nile Campaign, 1884-6; to those of the 1st Battalion who fell in the South African War, 1899-1902; to Lieut. Francis Newton Parsons, V.C., who was killed at the battle of Driefontein, in 1900; to 185 officers and 3,244 warrant officers, N.C.O's. and men of the 1st and 2nd Battalions who were killed or died of disease in the war of 1914-1919, and to Major-General T. E. Stephenson, C.B., Major-General F. Ventris, C.B., Colonel Almeric G. Spencer and Lieut.-Colonel W. G. Charles, C.M.G., D.S.O. (the four latter oaken pews). Stained glass windows, also to the memory of those who fell in the war of 1914-1919, have been erected by the 4th (T.), 5th (T.), 6th (T.), 7th (T.), 9th (Service) and 10th (Service) Battalions. That of the 9th Battalion was the personal gift of Brigadier-General C. G. Lewes, C.M.G., D.S.O. The apse windows were presented by the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The 11th (Service) Battalion provided a new south door at a cost of £40. The memorial at Alverstoke Church, Hampshire, to officers and men who perished in the Afghan campaign, 1841-42, was removed to the Church in 1926. The wording upon the tablet runs: Sacred to the memory of Colonel T. Mackrell, A.D.C. to Her Majesty, Major W. B. Scott, Captain T. Swaine, Captain R. B. McCrea, Captain T. R. Leighton, Captain T. Robinson, Captain T. C. Collins, Lieut. W. H. Dodgin, Lieut. W. G. White, Lieut. F. M. Wade, Lieut. A. Hogg, Lieut. E. S. Cumberland, Lieut. W. G. Raban, Lieut. H. Cadett, Lieut. S. Swinton, Lieut. F. J. C. Fortye, Lieut. A. W. Gray, Paymaster T. Bourke, Lieut. and Q.M. R. R. Halahan, Surgeon J. Harcourt, Assistant Surgeons W. Balfour, W. Primrose and 645 non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the 44th Regiment, who fell upon the field of battle in the disastrous Afghan War of 1841 and 1842. They sank with arms in their hands unconquered, but overpowered by the united horrors of climate, treachery and barbarous warfare. Their colours, saved by Captain J. Souter, one of the few survivors, hang above this stone, which is erected to their memory by the

officers of the 44th Regiment, June, 1844. "And if Thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy because they have sinned against Thee, and shall return and confess Thy name, and pray and make supplication before Thee, then hear Thou from the Heavens and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel.—2nd Chronicles vi, 24, 25." In March, 1927, there was erected on the south side of the Chapel an oak cross from Trones Wood, France, as a memorial of the 53rd Brigade of the 18th Division. It bears the names of the three battalions composing the Brigade, viz., 10th Battalion The Essex Regiment, 8th Battalion The Royal Berkshire Regiment and 7th Battalion The Royal West Kent Regiment, with the 53rd Trench Mortar Battery. The following is the inscription: "To the glory of God and the memory of those of the 53rd Infantry Brigade (18th Division) who fell gloriously in re-taking Trones Wood from the 2nd Guards Grenadier Regiment, 27th August, 1918." An appeal was issued, with the approval of the Lord-Lieutenant, during the chaplaincy of Rev. W. F. Crosthwait, M.C., asking the County to contribute the sum of £2,000 for the furnishing and re-seating of the Chapel. As the result, the County Borough of Southend presented the oaken choir stalls (dedicated February 26th, 1928, by the Archdeacon of Southend, Ven. P. M. Bayne); the Borough of Ilford the west door (March 25th, 1928); the Borough of Chelmsford the pulpit (July 15th, 1928); the Borough of Maldon the lectern (July 20th, 1930) and the Borough of Colchester, west window (December 7th, 1930). A memorial to the Lord-Lieutenant (Lord Lambourne), Provincial Grand Master of Essex from 1902 to 1928, and to the Masonic brethren of Essex who fell in the War, 1914-19, was unveiled on May 31st, 1931. It consisted of a new front to the West Gallery. Several private gifts have been also made as memorials.

AFFILIATED REGIMENTS.

In 1926, in accordance with the official desire that British battalions should be linked with units in the Overseas Dominions, the Essex Regiment was associated with the Essex Fusiliers, Canadian Militia, with headquarters at Windsor, Ontario. This unit dates from 1866, when the 23rd Essex Battalion of Light Infantry was constituted, with Lieut.-Colonel A. Rankin in command. There were six companies, one each at Windsor (organized in 1862), Sandwich (1862), Leamington (1863), Amherstburg (1863), North Ridge (1861) and Kingsville (1866). The Battalion was removed from the list of active Militia in 1870, because it failed to complete its re-organization, but the Windsor and Leamington companies were retained as independent companies. These two continued to function until 1882, when the Windsor Company was attached to the 24th (Kent) Battalion and the Leamington Company to the 25th (Elgin) Battalion. At the time of the North-West Rebellion the 21st (Essex) Battalion was raised and the two independent companies became the first and second companies

of the new unit. The three other companies were formed at Essex Centre, Amherstburg and Windsor respectively. Lieut.-Colonel J. R. Wilkinson was in command. The title was changed in 1887 to 21st Battalion, Essex Fusiliers, and again in 1901 to 21st Regiment, Essex Fusiliers, when it became a city corps, with headquarters at "The Armouries," which were opened at Windsor in the year following. The Battalion in 1904 had an establishment of eight companies, of which only two (Walkerville and Leamington) had headquarters outside Windsor. The Governor-General (the Earl of Elgin) was entertained by the officers of the Battalion when on a visit to Windsor and in 1902 the detachment was invited to Detroit to partake in the festivities consequent upon the visit of President Roosevelt, and was inspected by him. The band of the Coldstream Guards was welcomed in 1903 and that of the Black Watch in 1904. One of the Regiment's most treasured distinctions is that it was the first Canadian regiment, as such, to enter the United States after the American War of Independence, when the members were the guests of the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition at St. Louis in 1904 and were there visited by General Cronje, one of the Boer leaders in the South African War. The Fusiliers supplied part of the guard of honour for the Duke and Duchess of York (King George V and Queen Mary) when taking part in the Quebec Terecentenary celebration in 1908.

Upon the outbreak of war in August, 1914, details were called out for home defence duty, which was the protection of the Windsor Armouries. The detachment was originally composed of 14 N.C.O.'s and men, under Sergeant-Major Smith. The duties were increased until by May, 1916, the guard comprised ninety N.C.O.'s and men. When, however, depot battalions were formed in October, 1917, the details were relieved from this service. The Battalion contributed hundreds of recruits to the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Six officers and 223 other ranks were sent in 1914 to the 1st Battalion, C.E.F., and between 200 and 300 other ranks to the 18th Battalion, C.E.F. The 99th Battalion, C.E.F., was authorized to be raised in December, 1915, in the regimental area, and sailed for England in June, 1916, with a strength of 30 officers and 825 other ranks. In 1915 between 200 and 300 men were enlisted for the 33rd Canadian Battalion, C.E.F. The 241st Battalion, C.E.F., was formed in the regimental area in 1916 and left Canada in April, 1917, with a strength of 21 officers and 625 other ranks. When in April, 1920, the Fusiliers were re-organized into one active and two reserve battalions of four companies each, the 1st perpetuated the 18th Battalion, C.E.F., the 2nd reserve, the 99th Battalion, C.E.F., and the 3rd reserve the 241st Battalion, C.E.F. The 99th and 241st Battalions did not proceed to France, but were used when in England to provide reinforcements to other units in the fighting zone. The 18th Battalion had long and honourable

service on the Western Front. It left Canada for England with a strength of 86 officers and 1,081 other ranks and, after a short stay, arrived in France on September 15th, 1915, as part of the 4th Brigade, 2nd Canadian Division. It was present at the stern fighting at St. Eloi in April, 1916; by a gallant advance of 1,200 yards in September, 1916, with the 4th Brigade, it rendered possible the capture of Courcellette the same evening; took part in the battle of Ancre Heights in October, when it advanced 500 yards north of Courcellette; was with the Canadian Corps in the capture of Vimy Ridge in April, 1917; suffered in the heavy fighting at Hill 70 in August, 1917; supported the attack upon Passchendaele late in 1917; made a determined advance with the Canadian Corps on August 8th, 1918, when it covered 5,000 yards and reached the extreme limit of the objective east of Marcelcave; co-operated with the 19th Battalion in the taking of Fransart on August 16th; fought with the Canadian Corps in the battle of the Scarpe at the end of August, capturing Guemappe, and in five days achieving an advance of seven miles; reached the southern outskirts of Iwuy after crossing the Canal de l'Escaut on October 10th, and when the Armistice was declared at 11 a.m. on November 11th, 1918, was at Cipy, immediately south of Mons, marching thence to the Rhine. The Battalion returned to the south of Brussels, Belgium, in January, 1919, and in April was transferred, with the other units of the 2nd Division, to England, and thence to Canada for demobilization. The 1st Battalion, C.E.F., was raised in Western Ontario and was composed of drafts from 16 Militia regiments, including the Essex Fusiliers, sailing with the first Canadian contingent in September, 1914. It was ordered to France in February, 1915, and was in reserve in April at Vlamertinghe, when the German gas attack temporarily broke the line, and it was pushed forward to fill the gap, suffering heavy casualties in the operation.

In 1919 Edward Prince of Wales paid an official visit to Windsor Armouries and was warmly welcomed. The re-organization of the Fusiliers, effected in 1921, placed the headquarters and three companies in Windsor, with "A" Company in Walkerville, but in 1924 the Walkerville Company was transferred to Windsor, so that the Battalion was concentrated there. In 1927 the Battalion adopted the kilt and was designated The Essex Scottish.

The 44th Battalion Australian Military Forces made a proposal of alliance with 1st Bn. The Essex Regiment in 1927, which was accepted, War Office approval being subsequently obtained. The Australian 44th has an honourable and interesting history. The Fremantle Rifle Volunteers were formed prior to the establishment of the Commonwealth Government and later became known as the Western Australian Infantry Regiment. When compulsory training was introduced the units were reorganized and the Regiment was then numbered the 86th. Many of the members of the corps, as successively designated,

served in Egypt, Soudan and South Africa, and earned for the Regiment the battle honour "South Africa, 1899-1902." At the close of the war of 1914-1919 all the regiments were re-numbered to commemorate the battalions constituting the Australian Imperial Force. Thus it was that the 86th became the 16th Battalion, A.I.F., and received the latter's colours. Another re-organization subsequently caused the Battalion to be known as the 44th. It was accorded the right of carrying on the traditions of the 44th Battalion, A.I.F. The latter had been raised early in 1916 by Major-General J. H. Bruche, C.M.G., when he was commandant in Western Australia, prior to going on service with the A.I.F. He remembers it as one of the very few battalions in which almost every man had a rifle, for most of the other units at the time had only one to eight men. The Battalion embarked for England on June 6th, 1916. There it was part of the 3rd Australian Division, then on Salisbury Plain. The Battalion was sent to France late in November and, after a spell of trench warfare, had its first experience of offensive operations at the Battle of Messines in June, 1917, when there were over 800 casualties. Thereafter to the close of the war the 44th were heavily engaged, notably in the fight for Passchendaele, the struggle to save Amiens and the victorious advance which took them to Bapaume and over the Hindenburg Line. The Battalion lost 488 killed and 1,346 wounded in its two years of service, during which it claims never to have sacrificed a trench and, whilst capturing hundreds of prisoners, to have lost only eight to the enemy. The battle honours inscribed on the regimental colours are, in addition to South Africa : Ypres, 1917, Passchendaele, Ancre, 1918, Amiens, Messines, 1917, Broodseinde, Somme, 1918, Hamel, Mont St. Quentin and Hindenburg Line.

COMMANDING OFFICERS.

(Regular Battalions).

COLONELS OF THE 44th REGIMENT OF FOOT.

Colonel James Long, 1741-1743.
 Colonel John Lee, 1743-1751.
 Colonel Sir Peter Halkett, Bart., 1751-1755.
 Colonel Robert Ellison, 1755-1756.
 Major-General James Abercromby, 1756-1781.
 Major-General Charles Rainsford, 1781-1809.
 General Sir Thomas Trigg, Bart., 1809-1814.
 General the Earl of Suffolk, 1814-1820.
 Lieut.-General Gore Browne, 1820-1843.
 Lieut.-General the Hon. Patrick Stuart, 1843-1855.
 Lieut.-General Sir Frederick Ashworth, 1855-1858.
 General Sir Thomas Reed, K.C.B., 1858-1884.

LIEUT.-COLONELS COMMANDING THE 44th REGIMENT.

Sir Peter Halkett, Bart., 1741-1755 (killed in action).
 The Hon. Thomas Gage, 1755-1758.
 William Farquhar, 1758-1759.
 William Eyre, 1759-1764.
 James Agnew, 1764-1777 (killed in action).
 Henry Hope, 1777-1789.
 William John Darley, 1789-1793.
 Robert Riddell, 1793-1796.
 David Ogilvie, 1796-1801 (killed in action).
 Kenneth McKenzie, 1801-1803.
 Alexander Dirom, 1803-1804.
 Sir Arthur Brooke, K.C.B., 1804-1819.¹
 Sir George Henry Frederick Berkeley, 1819-1821.
 Joseph Wanton Morrison, 1821-1825 (died of cholera at sea
 after Burmese War).
 J. Chilton L. Carter, 1825-1827.
 John Shelton, 1827-1845.²
 Hon. Augustus Almeric Spencer, 1845-1856.

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1. Colonel Sir Arthur Brooke commanded the 1st Battalion when ordered to America in 1814 and was a brigadier in the expeditionary force until Sir Patrick Ross was killed in September, when he assumed command of the troops. He was a brigadier in the attack upon New Orleans in 1815, when General Sir E. Pakenham was in command. The acting command of the Battalion was held by the Hon. Thomas Mullins, who, himself, was a temporary brigadier in September, 1814, at the battle near Baltimore. Major Johnson was in acting command of the Battalion on that occasion.
 2. Lieut.-Colonel Shelton was a local brigadier-general and major-general in the East Indies from January, 1839, to January, 1842, and Lieut.-Colonel Thomas Mackrell was, therefore, in command of the Regiment during the fighting at Kabul, as a result of which he died from wounds in November, 1841. During the retreat Colonel Shelton resumed command of the Regiment.

Charles William Dunbar Staveley, 1856-1865.¹
 Patrick William MacMahon, 1865-1866.
 Sir John Josiah Hort, 1866-1869.
 Andrew Browne, 1869-1871.
 Thomas Raikes, 1871-1875.
 Richard Preston, 1875-1876.
 John Sidney Hand, 1876-1881.

LIEUT.-COLONELS COMMANDING 2nd BATTALION OF THE 44th REGIMENT.

Thomas Nichol, 1803-1804.
 Robert Garden, 1804-1809.
 Sir Charles Bulkeley Egerton, Bart., 1809-1811.
 Hon. George Carleton, 1811-1814 (killed in action).
 John Millet Hamerton, 1814-1816.

LIEUT.-COLONELS OF RESERVE BATTALION OF THE 44th REGIMENT.

James Oliphant Clunie, 1847-1848.
 Augustus Halifax Ferryman, 1848-1849.
 Edward Thorpe, 1849-1850.

COLONELS OF THE 56th REGIMENT OF FOOT.

Major-General Lord Charles Manners, 1755-1761.
 Lieut.-General the Hon. William Keppel, 1761-1765.
 Lieut.-General James Durand, 1765-1766.
 General Hunt Walsh, 1766-1795.
 F.M. Sir Samuel Hulse, 1795-1797.
 General the Hon. Chapple Norton, 1797-1818.
 General Sir John Murray, Bart., 1818-1827.
 Lieut.-General Lord Aylmer, K.C.B., 1827-1832.
 Lieut.-General Sir Hudson Lowe, K.C.B., G.C.M.G.,
 1832-1842.
 Lieut.-General the Earl of Westmorland, K.C.B., G.C.H.,
 1842-1859.
 Lieut.-General John Home Home, 1859-1860.
 General H. W. Breton, 1860.

LIEUT.-COLONELS COMMANDING THE 56th REGIMENT.

Peter Parr, 1755-1760.
 John Doyne, 1760-1762.
 James Stewart, February-September, 1762 (died on active
 service).
 Alexander Monypenny, 1762-1776.
 John Caulfield, 1776-1778.
 Henry Johnson, 1778-1779.

1. Colonel Staveley was only in nominal command of the Regiment for several years before his retirement from that position in 1865, he being constantly on staff employ, and Lieut.-Colonel MacMahon was in command in his absence.

Peter Craig, 1779-1799.¹
 Philip K. Skinner, 1799-1815.²
 Fletcher Barclay, 1815-1831.
 Howell Harris Prichard, 1831-1836.
 George Morton Eden, 1836-1839.
 Robert O'Hara, July-August, 1839.
 William Hassel Eden, 1839-1854.
 Soulden Oakeley, 1854-1856.³
 Richard Walter Lacy, 1856-1869.
 George William Patey, 1869-1873.
 George Frederick Berry, 1873-1878.
 Francis Charles Hill, 1878-1881.

LIEUT.-COLONELS COMMANDING 2nd BATTALION OF THE 56th REGIMENT.

Henry Samuel Keating, 1804-1812.⁴
 Nigel Kingscote, 1812-1818.

1. Although Lieut.-Colonel Peter Craig was upon the muster rolls as lieut.-colonel commanding for twenty years, he was not present with the Regiment for the greater part of the time. He was advanced successively to the rank of Colonel, 1782, Major-General, 1793, and Lieut.-General, 1798. He signed the musters in 1793, but after that appears to have been on leave. There are very few muster rolls of the Regiment extant before muster books were used in 1798, when Craig was still commanding the Regiment, but on leave in Europe. He was transferred to the command of the 62nd Foot in 1799 and was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel P. K. Skinner from the 23rd Foot. Major Bulleine Fancourt was in command of the Regiment during the siege of Gibraltar, 1779-1783, and for his services there received the brevet rank of lieutenant-colonel. Other officers who probably had command of the Regiment were Lieut.-Colonel William Earle Bulwer, 1795, and John Whitwell, 1796. When the latter died Lieut.-Colonel Picton (General Sir Thomas Picton) was placed upon the strength as lieut.-colonel, the Regiment then being in the West Indies. This distinguished officer probably never served with the 56th, for he was constantly employed upon staff appointments thereafter, but he was returned as having a company in 1799, as the custom for a field officer then was, and he remained on the musters till November 25th, 1812. The reason for the apparent anomaly in respect of Lieut.-Colonel Peter Craig is thus explained by Major H. G. Parkyn: "Towards the end of 1795 the establishment of Regiments was increased to 12 companies, the two extra companies being formed for depot purposes, and as I find it is in nearly every case that the additional lieut.-colonel's commission is dated during this year, it is fairly evident, I think, that he (Craig) nominally commanded what was in reality a depot."
2. Lieut.-Colonel P. K. Skinner was appointed Colonel in 1809 and Major-General in 1812. In that year he became Q.M.G., India, and when he left for that appointment Brevet Lieut.-Colonel Fletcher Barclay appears to have been in acting command for some time. He was confirmed in the position in 1815. When he returned to the 1st Battalion at Bellary, India, in 1810, he was entertained to dinner by the officers in honour of his promotion to Colonel. The custom of those days is illustrated in a War Office list of field officers in 1814, when the following were returned: P. K. Skinner, m.g., 11th December, 1799; F. Barclay, s., 27th June, 1811; (2) Nigel Kingscote, 17 O.; B. Travers, m.g., 2nd January, 1812; (3) J. F. Brown, 3rd March; Henry Sullivan, 1st July, 1813, and (3) J. W. Mallet, 6th November.
3. Lieut.-Colonel Oakeley died in October, 1856. He was returned as lieut.-colonel commanding from 1854 to 1856, but he was not with the Regiment in July, 1855, for Major Samuel Symes Cox then signed the musters and Lieut.-Colonel Lacy succeeded Cox in May, 1856.
4. Lieut.-Colonel Keating was Major in the 56th Regiment in 1800 and commanded the 2nd Battalion in 1804. He signed the musters of the 2nd Battalion from 1805 to 1808, but from August, 1809, to July, 1812, was absent on special service. It is improbable he returned to the Regiment, for after he was wounded in operations for the capture of Mauritius he was transferred to the command of the Bourbon Regiment in that year.

**LIEUT.-COLONEL COMMANDING 3rd BATTALION OF
THE 56th REGIMENT.**

John Frederick Brown, 1813-1814.

**LIEUT.-COLONELS COMMANDING RESERVE BATTALION
OF THE 56th REGIMENT.**

Peter Shadwell Norman, 1846-1849.

Edmund William Wilton Passey, 1849-1850.

COLONELS OF THE ESSEX REGIMENT.

- { General Sir Thomas Reed, G.C.B., 1858-1884.
- { General Henry William Breton, 1860-1889.
- General Sir Charles W. D. Staveley, K.C.B., 1884-1896.
- General Sir Archibald Alison, Bt., G.C.B., 1896-1897.
- Lieut.-General the Hon. J. J. Bourke, 1897-1904.
- Major-General F. Ventris, C.B., 1904-1929.
- Major-General J. C. Harding Newman, C.B., C.M.G., 1929.

**LIEUT.-COLONELS COMMANDING 1st BATTALION OF
THE ESSEX REGIMENT.**

- C. E. Rennie, 1881-1885.
- C. Maguire, 1885-1887.
- R. B. Bald, 1887-1891.
- W. Wood, 1891-1895.
- T. E. Stephenson, 1895-1900.
- C. Wood, 1900-1904.¹
- W. G. Carter, 1904-1908.
- H. Broadmead, 1908-1912.
- F. Gore Anley, 1912-1913.
- O. G. Godfrey Faussett, 1913-1915 (killed in action).²
- C. G. Lewes, January-September, 1919.
- F. W. Moffitt, 1919-1923.
- A. B. Incedon Webber, 1923-1927.
- A. E. M. Sinclair Thomson, 1927.
- G. H. Wilmer, 1931.

**LIEUT.-COLONELS COMMANDING 2nd BATTALION OF
THE ESSEX REGIMENT.**

- A. Greenland, 1882-1883 (died at Gibraltar).
- W. R. White, 1883-1887.
- Almeric G. Spencer, 1887-1891.
- T. Prickett, 1891-1895.

1. During considerable periods of the South African War the Battalion was commanded by Major F. J. Brown (Colonel F. J. Brown, C.B.), including the battles of Paardeberg and Driefontein and the advance to Koomati Poort.
2. In the war 1914-1919 the Battalion was successively commanded by Lieut.-Colonel O. G. Godfrey Faussett (killed May, 1915), Lieut.-Colonels or acting Lieut.-Colonels H. R. Rice, May-August, 1915; G. M. Tufnell, September, 1915; A. V. Clutterbuck, September, 1915-April, 1916; A. C. Halahan, July, 1916-April, 1917; Sir George Stirling, Bart., April, 1917-April, 1918; A. R. C. Sanders, April-September, 1918, and T. J. E. Blake, September-December, 1918. There were four other temporary commanders, but they acted for periods of less than a month.

D. A. Blest, 1895-1899.
 T. Stock, 1899-1902.
 F. J. Brown, 1902-1906.
 R. J. Tudway, 1906-1910.
 L. R. Carleton, 1910-1913.
 F. Gore Anley, 1913-1914.¹
 A. P. Churchill, 1919-1924.
 C. R. Roberts West, 1924-28.
 H. R. Bowen, 1928.
 H. Gordon, 1932.

Officers were present at the following battles and sieges :—

44th.

Storm of Badajos, 1812 : Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. George Carleton (killed whilst commanding a brigade at Bergen-op-Zoom, 1814), Captains John Berwick (w.), Adam Brugh (w.), John Cruice, F. Elwin, J. C. Guthrie, F. B. Jervoise (k.), J. Jessop, Lieutenants Mathew Argent (k.), Robert Grier, Charles Keane, William Fitzman Lennon, Thomas Mackrell, W. H. Meade (k., Bergen-op-Zoom, 1814), R. Peacocke, (w.), William Pearce (w.), L. J. Penton, J. P. Shaw, T. F. Sinclair (w.), W. S. Unthank (k.), Ensigns John O'Reilly, William Standley and Assistant Surgeon J. Collins.

Battle of Salamanca, 1812 : Brevet Lieut.-Colonel George Hardinge, Captains John Berwick (k.), A. Brugh (w.), F. Elwin, J. C. Guthrie, J. Jessop, Lieutenants H. Elwin (d. of w., retreat from Burgos, 1812), Robert Grier, Charles Keane, Thomas Mackrell, W. H. Meade, William Pearce (w.), L. J. Penton, J. P. Shaw, Michael Scott (d. of w., retreat from Burgos, 1812), Ensigns John O'Reilly, William Standley (k.), Quartermaster Henry Jones, Assistant Surgeon J. Collins and Sergeant-Major J. Christie.

Battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo, 1815 : Lieut.-Colonel John Millet Hamerton (w., Q.B.), Major G. O'Malley (s.w., W.), Major J. Jessop, Captains A. Brugh (w., W.), David Power, (w., Q.B.), William Burney (w., Q.B.), H. Mildmay Fane (w., Q.B.), Lieutenants Robert Russell (w., Q.B.), Ralph John Twinberrow, Robert Grier (w., Q.B.), William Tomkins (k., Q.B.), William Burrough Strong (w., Q.B.), John Campbell (s.w., Q.B.), Nicholas Toler Kingsley, James Burke (s.w., W.), Henry Martin, William Marcus Hern (w., Q.B.), Alexander Reddock, Ensigns James Christie (w., Q.B.), B. Whitney (w., Q.B. and W.), Gillespie

1. During the war the following officers commanded the Battalion for the periods stated : Lieut.-Colonels or acting Lieut.-Colonels G. M. Tufnell, September, 1914-January, 1915 ; L. O. W. Jones, January-November, 1915 ; Sir George Stirling, Bart., November, 1915-November, 1916 ; R. N. Thompson, November, 1916-January, 1917 ; S. G. Mullock, January-February, 1917 ; A. G. Pratt, February-March, 1917 ; S. G. Mullock, March-April, 1917 (killed in action) ; N. M. S. Irwin, April-May, 1917 ; R. N. Thompson, May-August, 1917 ; A. G. Pratt, August-October, 1917 ; R. N. Thompson, October-December, 1917 ; J. W. Watkins, January, 1918 ; R. N. Thompson, January-May, 1918 ; A. E. Maitland, May-November, 1918.

Dunlevie, Peter Cooke (k., Q.B.), Thomas McCann (Adjutant, w., W.), James Carnegie Webster (w., Q.B.), Alexander Wilson (w., Q.B.), Paymaster James Williams, Quartermaster Henry Jones, Surgeon Oliver Halpin, Assistant Surgeons John Collins and William Newton. Major Fountain Elwin, Captains John Cleland Guthrie and George Crozier, Lieutenants George Newberry and Robert Peacocke were detained at Ostend as members of a general court-martial, Brevet Lieut.-Colonel Gregory was commandant at Ostend, Lieut. Frederick Hemming was acting engineer and Lieut. Temple Frederick Sinclair was town adjutant. These officers were, therefore, not eligible for the Waterloo Medal.

56th.

Siege of Gibraltar, 1779-1782 : Major Bulleine Fancourt (in command), Major John Barker, Major John Hardy, Major John Hallowes, Captains John Cassan, Meredith Chambers, Henry Hamilton, Samuel Moore, John Pigot, Rice Price, Wyndham Quin, Charles Valletot (or Vallotton), Captain Lieutenant James Willerd, Lieutenants James Barrington, John Chapman, Thomas Jackson, E. J. Fancourt, T. Nixon, Fred Page, Charles Roberts, Edward Vicars, Richard White, Samuel Wood, Ensigns Bradshaw, Francis Craig, Richard Edgar Gyllett, Edward Harling, Benjamin Johnson and George Johnstone, with Chaplain Charles O'Niel and Surgeon Thomas Chisholme.

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Essex Territorial Infantry Brigade.

FORMATION OF VOLUNTEER RIFLE CORPS.

THE Volunteer Force which had come into being to meet the threat of French invasion lapsed in Essex, as elsewhere, after the peace which followed Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. The infantry had already largely disappeared, having been replaced by the Local Militia, though certain corps persisted until 1815. So for forty years Essex possessed no Volunteer unit other than a regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry. Then came the alarm that France intended hostile action in this country, largely caused by the assumption by Napoleon III of the imperial title. Both nation and military advisers became uneasy. As early as 1847 the Duke of Wellington had called attention to the defenceless state of the country and in 1852 Sir Charles Napier's appeal that the defensive forces should be established on an adequate basis added power to the growing tide of popular feeling. Frequent applications were made to the War Office for recognition of volunteer corps, but the Government steadfastly refused to countenance them. Despite official disfavour, rifle corps sprang into being, one of the first of which was the Royal Victoria Rifles (later the Victoria and St. George's Rifles), which in 1853 obtained permission to form a battalion of four companies of 75 men each. They were just headed in pride of place by the South Devon Volunteer Rifle Association, which was recognized as early as December, 1852, under the Volunteer Act of 1804. The Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny stimulated the fire of national feeling and volunteer corps grew thereafter in numbers and in strength. Tennyson's clarion call to arms, "Riflemen, form!" published in May, 1859, gave lyrical expression to public desire, for war seemed imminent with France. Three days later the War Office issued to the Lords Lieutenant a circular authorizing the raising of volunteer corps under the Act of 1804. An essential condition laid down by the circular was that the corps should bear the entire expense of their equipment and maintenance, except in the event of their being assembled for actual service. Other requirements were: (a) Enforcement of military discipline; (b) institution of a system of drill and instruction adapted to the opportunities and vocations of members and to include efficient knowledge of the use of the rifle; (c) restriction of the numbers of companies to 100 of all ranks as a maximum in order to obviate the necessity of a lengthened and complicated system of drill and instruction. A supplementary circular, issued towards the end of May, urged that the new Volunteer Force should qualify to act as an efficient auxiliary to

the Regular Army and Militia. Two classes of troops were contemplated, viz., corps of riflemen and sharpshooters for service in the field, and other units to assist in the defence of ports. The principles of training and employment in national emergency were more fully detailed in the following paragraphs: "The nature of our country, with its numerous enclosures and other impediments to the operations of troops in line, give peculiar importance to the service of volunteer riflemen, in which bodies each man, deriving confidence from his own skill in the use of his arm and from his reliance on the support of his comrades—men whom he has known and with whom he has lived from his youth up—intimately acquainted, besides, with the country in which he would be called upon to act, would hang with the most telling effect upon the flanks and communications of a hostile army. The instruction, therefore, that is most requisite is practice in the use and handling of the rifle, and with a view to this, sites for firing at a target should be established, if possible, in every locality in which companies or bodies of volunteer riflemen are formed, and every encouragement given to the men to avail themselves of them, leaving it to themselves to select their hours for practice, or for such further instruction, as sharpshooters, as it may appear desirable to give them, viz., how to extend and avail themselves of cover and fire advancing or retiring, to protect themselves from cavalry or other simple movements, which, while leaving every man his independent action, would enable them to act together with more effect. Interested as the more wealthy classes throughout the country will be in the efficiency of such bodies of volunteers formed in their own neighbourhood, they will doubtless co-operate heartily with the Lords Lieutenant of Counties in endeavouring to find such sites for practice, and in whatever else may tend to further the object in view."

In anticipation of the Government being forced to take action, by February, 1859, some 60,000 men had been enrolled, which number, after the issue of the circular, had, by the end of May, risen to 134,000. The movement ran like wildfire. By the end of 1860 twenty-three Essex companies had been gazetted. The county stood twelfth in order of precedence among English and Scotch counties. The first to be recognized was the Cranbrooke Company from Ilford, but it will be observed from the list that the numbering of the companies is not in strict order of the date of recognition:

1st Co.	Romford (Captain Alfred Hamilton, then Captain Champion Russell)	16/2/60
2nd Co.	Ilford (Captain J. Coope Davis)	12/8/59
3rd Co.	Brentwood (Captain O. E. Coope)	12/10/59
4th Co.	Chelmsford (Captain W. M. Tufnell)	8/11/59
5th Co.	Plaistow (Major Comm. C. Capper)	9/1/60
6th Co.	Colechester (Captain Sir C. W. C. de Crespigny, Bart.)	20/12/59

7th Co.	Rochford (Lieut. A. Tawke)	8/3/60
8th Co.	Stratford (Major Commandant Horatio Love, 10/7/60)	6/3/60
9th Co.	Silvertown (Captain Comm. H. A. Silver)	1/2/60
10th Co.	Witham (Lieut. W. G. Luard, then Lieut. Charles Wood)	30/12/59
11th Co.	Dunmow (Lieut. J. M. Wilson)	21/3/60
12th Co.	Braintree (Lieut. Basil Sparrow)	16/3/60
13th Co.	Dedham, Stour Valley (Lieut. Aug. Paterson, late Captain, 42nd Foot)	8/3/60
14th Co.	Manningtree (Lieut. B. W. Cocker, Lieut.-Colonel, late 38th Foot)	17/5/60
15th Co.	Hornchurch (Captain Peter E. Bearblock)	11/6/60
16th Co.	Great Bentley (Captain John Cardinall)	27/9/60
17th Co.	Saffron Walden (Captain the Hon. C. C. Neville)	23/10/60
18th Co.	Chipping Ongar (Captain P. J. Budworth)	4/2/60
19th Co.	Epping (Lieut. Sir W. B. Smyth, Bart.)	22/9/60
20th Co.	Haverhill (Lieut. Ellys A. S. Walton)	27/12/60
21st Co.	Brentwood (Captain Sir Kingsmill G. Key, Bart.)	24/9/60
22nd Co.	Waltham Abbey (Captain William Leask)	24/9/60
23rd Co.	Maldon (Captain J. A. Hamilton, late Captain, 41st Foot)	13/11/60

In April, 1861, a twenty-fourth company was added, viz., Woodford (Captain Comm. George Noble).

HOW THE UNITS WERE RAISED.

Details are preserved of the methods which were employed and the active encouragement that was given to recruiting in a movement which evoked the enthusiastic support of all classes of people in the county. It spread with rapidity, particularly in suburban Essex, where the large and still increasing population provided ready means of filling the ranks. The leading officers were then resident in the localities where the units were raised and their influence was undoubtedly of great assistance in attracting recruits. The originator of the Volunteer force in West Ham was Mr. Charles Capper, of Lawn House, Upton Lane, manager of Victoria Dock, who had been formerly Superintendent of the Eastern Counties Railway. He sought to raise a company of 100 riflemen and 50 artillerymen among the dock employees and guaranteed the funds necessary to equip them. The success was immediate, and in November, 1859, 300 infantrymen had enrolled, though the artillery had yet to be raised. Originally gazetted the 6th Essex Volunteers, the number was in 1860 changed to the 5th, when the corps was four companies strong. Mr. Hugh A. Silver, early in 1860, had enrolled 200 men employed at the india rubber works, dressed in dark grey uniforms with black facings. They were formed into

two companies under the title of the Ninth Essex (or Silvertown) Rifle Volunteers and were later, with the Dock companies above mentioned, designated the Second Administrative Battalion. Mr. Horatio Love, Chairman of the Eastern Counties Railway Company, in December, 1859, promised outfits to the railwaymen who became Volunteers. The suggestion was taken up with enthusiasm and four companies were formed—two at Bishopsgate and two at the Stratford works. The officers' commissions were dated March 6th, 1860. This corps became the 8th Essex. The Silvertown men were sworn in on February 4th, 1860, at the North Woolwich railway terminus, the 8th Essex at the Mechanics' Institute on April 14th and the Victoria Dock men on May 18th, at Wanstead. There the 5th Essex made their first charge! An "Aunt Sally" had been set up in the centre of the Avenue and the proprietor refused to budge. The West Ham Volunteers were ordered to clear the way and this they did most effectually. During 1860 the movement still spread in West Ham and companies were formed at Barking Road, Stratford, Plaistow, a third company at Silvertown, distinct from Messrs. Silver's employees, and yet another at Wanstead. Thus by the end of 1860 there were 15 companies in being. Speaking in January, 1861, Colonel Capper claimed that the ten companies of the 5th Essex, numbering 1,000 men, were second only in strength to the London Rifle Brigade, and that West Ham, with a population of 37,000, possessed over 1,300 volunteers. The uniform was diversified. The Silvertown companies wore grey and the Victoria Dock men green. The Stratford corps were also in green, but with wrist and collar embroidered with scarlet, whilst instead of a green ball upon their shakos, they had a scarlet and black plume. West Ham was represented at the first Wimbledon rifle contest in 1860, when Captain S. Howard was one of the party who shot for the Queen's Prize. He withdrew, however, before the competition closed, because some of the rifles had been sighted for long ranges and others had not.

Ilford formed a committee in July, 1859. The recruiting area was not confined to that town, but included the wide district from Barking to the Forest. Within a month the company was 60 strong, with Mr. John Coope Davis, of Cranbrook Park, as captain. Later it was gazetted as the 2nd Essex. Ilford maintained that it should have had priority as 1st Essex, because, although Romford made an earlier start, it was asserted that the old Essex market town then stopped recruiting for some months and the Ilford company was brought into existence during that period. Their protest was unavailing and Romford remained the 1st Essex Corps.

The commander of the Romford Company, Major Champion Russell, of Stubbers, North Ockendon, was also a major in the West Essex Militia and extremely keen in the performance

of the duties of both offices. In or about 1872, however, an official decree was issued that an officer could not hold two such appointments and, as a consequence, Major Russell resigned from the Volunteers and was presented with a meerschau pipe in the form of a rifleman smoking. The face was a very good likeness, quite accidental, however, for someone saw it casually and was struck with the resemblance to the Major for whom it was subsequently purchased. It was inscribed, "Presented to Major C. Russell by the members of the Essex R.V., on his retiring from the command of the Corps, 2nd November, 1872." The major was an enthusiastic rifle shot and was a competitor at Wimbledon. He had a range of about 700 yards constructed in the grounds of his residence and there the local marksmen—the best of whom was Private Cook, a shoemaker at Upminster—were wont to practice before taking part in competitions. Another habit of the Major's was to paste little paper targets, representing the bullseye as seen on different ranges, upon his gun room wall, and to practise snapping at them, so as to get used to the different ranges.¹

At the headquarters of the 7th Battalion The Essex Regiment is preserved the original minute book recording the establishment of the local Company at Walthamstow. The first meeting of residents was held in the Vestry Room in June, 1859. The expense of equipment was a difficulty. This caused delay, but at another meeting at the Infants' Schoolroom, on September 13th, 1860, Mr. Bonamy Dobree being in the chair, it was resolved, on the motion of Mr. John Gurney Fry, to enrol a Volunteer Rifle Corps and "thus join the great national movement for placing the country in a state of defence." As usual with English institutions, a committee was formed and Mr. W. T. Hooper was appointed hon. secretary and treasurer. The annual subscription for enrolled members was fixed at £1 1s., subsequently reduced to 10s. 6d., and for honorary members at £2 2s., also later reduced to one guinea. The cost of uniform was ordered not to exceed £3 13s., this to include coat, trousers, waistbelt, bayonet sheath, cartouche box, cap and knee cap. There was some difficulty in ensuring that all members would pay for their uniforms and

1. When the rifle range was disused, a quantity of Enfield rifle ammunition was left intact and the son, Mr. Champion Russell, J.P., remembers with a school friend stalking guinea fowl, which were practically wild, with an old fowling piece, and finding the ammunition very useful. He has other humorous recollections of Major Russell's service. On the occasion of a Volunteer review the maid, by mistake, packed the company commander's Militia head-dress. The consternation thereby caused was considerable until it was discovered that the Bandmaster's hat exactly fitted Major Russell's head. As a small child, Mr. Champion Russell remembers with pride that he was allowed, at a Volunteer fete at Stubbers, as a special privilege, to bang the big drum! But the fete had other memories, too. There were two Wimbledon trophies on the table in the tent, two silver pepper pots. The coachman, noting one of them at the end of the table, put it in his pocket, thinking it might be looted, and one of the maids did the like at the other end, each unknown to the other. Then the old nurse found the silver was missing and excitement was intense until the whereabouts were discovered.

it was accordingly decided that clothing should be served out to those who could satisfy the Committee of their inability to purchase them. There was close association from the first with the Ilford Company, the commander of which (Captain Davis) lent his sergeant-instructor for two days per week. It was agreed that recruits from Wanstead should be permitted to join the Company. Union with Woodford for the purpose of forming two or more companies was not assented to, for on November 5th, 1860, it was decided that as the number of Volunteers in Walthamstow and Leyton was nearly sufficient to form a separate Company, they should join the 2nd (Ilford) Essex Volunteer Rifle Corps as the second, or "B" Company. Woodford Volunteers were to be welcomed, however, in the ranks of the Company. Mr. W. Cotesworth was nominated captain, Mr. A. Wilson lieutenant and Mr. B. Dobree ensign. This selection secured the assent of the members of the Company at a meeting held the same night at the Drill Room, next to the "Nag's Head." The Committee was accordingly dissolved and a Finance Committee was appointed in its place, composed of representatives of the effective and honorary members.

Queen Victoria inspected the English Volunteers in Hyde Park in June, 1860, and Mr. Christopher Tower, of Weald Hall, who had been a Volunteer during the Napoleonic War, marched past Her Majesty as a private in the Brentwood corps. For purposes of inspection, the Volunteer units were grouped into divisions, Essex being part of the East Midland Division, with the rural portions of Middlesex, also the counties of Hertford, Buckinghamshire, Oxford, Northampton, Huntingdon, Bedford, Cambridge, Suffolk and Norfolk. The need for a closer system of administration was quickly realized and in July, 1860, two administrative battalions were formed in Essex, the first commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Sir Claude W. de Crespigny, Bart. (1/6/60), with Major W. N. Tufnell second-in-command, and the second by Lieut.-Colonel Charles Capper (19/6/60), with Major H. A. Silver second-in-command. There were also nine independent corps. In July, 1861, a third administrative battalion was gazetted, Lieut.-Colonel J. Coope Davis in command (6/7/61), with Major O. E. Coope as second-in-command. The adjutants were: 1st Battalion, Captain H. O. de Crespigny, late Captain, Essex Rifles, and Lieut., 20th Foot; 2nd Battalion, Captain Charles Davis, late 10th Hussars, and 3rd Battalion, Captain David Steuart, late Captain, 34th Foot. The companies grouped into battalions were:—

1st (Colchester)¹: Chelmsford, Colchester, Witham, Dunmow, Braintree, Dedham, Manningtree, Great Bentley and Maldon.

2nd (Plaistow): Plaistow and Silvertown.

3rd (Ilford): Romford, Ilford, Brentwood (2), Rochford, Hornchurch, Chipping Ongar, Epping and Woodford.

1. In March, 1862, this Battalion became the 1st (Chelmsford) Battalion.

Of the independent companies the 22nd (Waltham Abbey) was united to the 2nd Hertfordshire Administrative Battalion in 1862, the 8th (Stratford) to the 2nd Essex Administrative Battalion in 1864, and the 17th (Saffron Walden) to the 2nd Cambridgeshire Administrative Battalion in 1865.

Well-known veterans served with the Volunteers. Lieut. Anthony Palmer, V.C., of the 3rd Battalion, had won his decoration as a private of the Grenadier Guards at Inkerman in November, 1855, when he charged a party of the enemy singlehanded and saved the life of Sir Charles Russell, then lieutenant-colonel of the Grenadiers. Captain Tyssen S. Holroyd, of the Colchester Company, late 23rd Foot, was in both the Crimean and Mutiny campaigns, including the relief and capture of Lucknow, whilst Captain Steuart, the adjutant of the 3rd Battalion, was present at the action before Cawnpore.

MANŒUVRES AT SOUTHEAD.

Martial enthusiasm ran strongly and much effort was made in those early years to fit the men for service against the possible invader. The mouth of the Thames was deemed one of the danger points and, for the purpose of acquainting the Volunteer with the terrain over which active service might possibly take place, extensive manœuvres were held at Southend in May, 1863. "From an early hour," according to the correspondent of the *Illustrated London News*, "the usually quiet locality of Southend was the scene of great activity and excitement in consequence of the large number of visitors who arrived by each successive train of the London and Tilbury Railway, and also by steamboats, to witness the spectacle of an attack by a naval squadron and Royal Marines against a defensive force of Volunteer Artillery, Engineers and Rifles." The day's proceedings began with drill by the 3rd Essex Administrative Battalion, under command of Lieut.-Colonel John Coope Davis, on the land opposite the Ship Hotel, Marine Parade, the companies present being 1st Essex (Romford), Captain Champion Russell; 2nd Essex (Ilford), Captain Commandant William Cotesworth and Captain Henry M. Harvey; 3rd Essex (Brentwood), Captain Hill; 7th Essex (Rochford), Captain Arthur Tawke; 15th Essex (Hornchurch), Captain Peter M. Bearblock; 18th Essex (Chipping Ongar), Captain Philip J. Budworth; 19th Essex (Epping), Captain Loftus W. Arkwright; 21st Essex (Brentwood), Captain William J. Burgess and 24th Essex (Woodford), Captain Commandant George Noble. At the conclusion of the parade the Battalion marched to Cliff Town, "which was the great centre of attraction, and the vast extent of open ground immediately adjacent to the heights facing the sea was thronged by immense multitudes of spectators, the most excellent arrangements having been made for the safety and accommodation of the public." Upon the Cliffs the 3rd Administrative Battalion was joined by other corps, viz., 15th Essex (Heybridge), Volunteer Engineers, Captain

E. H. Bental : 1st Administrative Battalion, Tower Hamlets Rifles, Lieut.-Col. C. Buxton, including 3rd (Spitalfields), Captain Commandant Sir T. F. Buxton ; 5th (Mile End), Captain G. E. Ludbrook, and 10th (Mile End Gate), Captain Davies ; 88th Middlesex, Captain Commandant H. W. Phillips ; detachments of the West Middlesex, London Artists and other Metropolitan corps ; 5th Essex (Plaistow), Colonel Commandant Charles Capper ; 22nd Essex (Waltham Abbey), Captain William Leask and 23rd (Maldon), Captain James A. Hamilton. The troops were reviewed by Colonel W. M. P. McMurdo, C.B., Inspector-General of Volunteers, with Brevet Lieut.-Colonel C. P. Ibbetson, Assistant Inspector. The infantry were then joined by two 40-pounder Armstrong guns, in charge of the depot brigade, Royal Artillery, and the West Essex Yeomanry Artillery, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel George Palmer, in preparation to resist a landing by a force of Royal Marines, conveyed by ships of the Royal Navy. The battery of the Yeomanry Artillery, commanded by Captain S. Bolton Edenborough, comprising six 6-pounders of the smooth bore pattern, was placed in position immediately on the summit of the Cliffs facing the points of expected attack, whilst the Armstrong guns, drawn by teams of eight horses, were in rear of the battery, their superior range enabling them to fire upon the squadron as it approached the shore. Shortly after 3 p.m. the attack upon Southend developed rapidly. Five steam gunboats were observed crossing the river from Sheerness. The alarm was sounded and the infantry dispositions were immediately made. When opposite Cliff Town the squadron opened fire, to which the shore batteries responded, and during this bombardment a force of 300 Royal Marines, under Captain Butcher, embarked in small boats and were rowed by the seamen towards the promenade at the foot of the cliffs. There a landing was effected under the superintendence of Vice Admiral F. W. Hope Johnstone, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief at the Nore, who had charge of the squadron. The Marines, having reformed on landing, immediately prepared to climb the Cliffs. Their effort was resisted by the Volunteers, "who had thrown out a party of skirmishers, who were supported by a line prepared for volley firing, which was carried out by right of companies. The gallant Royal Marines at all hazards continued to advance and, with some difficulty, ultimately reached the summit of the cliffs by means of a bayonet charge ; rushing up at the various points of declivity and re-forming, in spite of all opposition, on the plain above. The Volunteer skirmishers and advance force retired to the main body and the Royal Marines moved in direct echelon of companies at quick march to the scene of action. The attacking force then confronted the centre line of the Volunteer army and a very brisk series of volley and file firing was kept up for several minutes. The Volunteers subsequently changed front, the battery guns were brought to

bear upon the invading force and, after various other movements of attack and defence, the bugle sounded a retreat and the Royal Marines retired to their boats." In less than an hour and a half the manœuvres were over, and then, the Volunteers having been formed into a square, they were congratulated by Colonel McMurdo upon their work and their efficient state, the Colonel considering it important that the Volunteer Force should become practically acquainted with the best means of resisting an enemy. He stated that it had been found necessary to limit some of the evolutions on account of the limited space at the point of landing.

ORGANIZATION INTO FOUR BATTALIONS.

In 1867 the 2nd Administrative Battalion was reorganized into two battalions. The Plaistow Battalion was known as the 5th Corps, Essex Rifle Volunteers, with headquarters at Plaistow, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel G. R. Birt, whilst the other Battalion, with headquarters at Silvertown, was termed the 9th, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel H. A. Silver. The 1st and 2nd Battalions absorbed separate corps which had not been included in the original grouping. The units were administered and equipped independently and wore different uniforms, though the companies in a battalion were dressed alike. The 3rd Battalion (Ilford) had a cadet corps attached in 1866, also the 1st Battalion (Chelmsford) in 1871. The commanding officers of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions remained unaltered for a long period, but the 1st Battalion had three changes of command in its six years. In 1868 Sir C. W. de Crespigny became Honorary Colonel and Mr. W. N. Tufnell, lieut.-colonel, succeeded in 1872 by Lieut.-Colonel T. H. Bramston, late Grenadier Guards. He had seen active service with the Rifle Brigade in the Kaffir War and had fought through the Crimean campaign, including the battles of Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman. In 1874 the command was vested in Captain W. N. Tufnell, late R.N. At the end of 1879 F.M. Sir Evelyn Wood, K.C.B., was appointed Honorary Colonel of 1st Battalion. The Volunteer movement in the county owes much to the never-failing interest which this distinguished Essex soldier manifested in its welfare for the next forty years, including the period of the Great War. He had a fine record of successful campaigns. Serving first as a midshipman with the Naval Brigade at the Battle of Inkerman in the Crimean War, he was severely wounded in the assault upon the Redan, 1855. Transferring to the military branch, he commanded a regiment of Beatson's Horse in the Indian Mutiny and in succession the 2nd Regiment of Mayne's Horse. In the course of the operations with the latter unit he was awarded the Victoria Cross. In the Ashanti War of 1873-4 he raised Wood's Regiment and commanded the right column at the battle of Amoafu, being present at the action before Coomassie. The Kaffir War of 1878 found him leading a clearing column, whilst in the Zulu War, which followed, he commanded a column

and was present at the battle of Ulundi. After he became Honorary Colonel of 1st Essex Battalion he commanded the English troops in the later stages of the first Boer War and conducted the peace negotiations with the Boers (1881). Then in the Egyptian Campaign of 1882, he commanded the 4th Brigade of the 2nd Division. In the Nile Expedition of 1884-5, he was Major-General upon Lines of Communication.

When localization of forces was introduced in 1873 the Essex Volunteer Rifles were grouped with the 44th Sub District, under command of O.C. Brigade Depot at Warley, and in 1874 the four battalions were allotted for purposes of local defence to brigades at Brightlingsea and Southend. In 1881 the short service system was introduced into the Regular Army and the recruitment of the regular battalions was established upon a territorial basis.

In July, 1880, the 1st Battalion had headquarters at Braintree, 2nd at Silvertown, the 3rd at Brentwood and the 4th at Plaistow. They all wore green, with green facings, except the 3rd, which had black uniforms with green facings. In August of the same year, however, there was a great change. The 3rd became the 1st, with headquarters at Ilford, the 1st was designated the 2nd, the 4th was re-numbered the 3rd and the 2nd became the 4th. The 2nd V.B. Essex (Lieut.-Colonel W. N. Tufnell) took part in the review at Windsor, on July 9th, 1881, when 60,000 Volunteers marched past Queen Victoria. The Battalion detrained at Ascot and marched thence to Windsor. Lieut.-Colonel O. E. Coope, who had succeeded Lieut.-Colonel Coope Davis, became Honorary Colonel of the 1st Battalion and Lieut.-Colonel W. J. Burgess assumed command. There was a great organic change in 1883, when the Essex Volunteers became part of the Essex Regiment, for they forsook their distinctive training as riflemen and were transformed into infantry of the line. They were then designated :—

- 1st Volunteer Battalion The Essex Regiment ; headquarters, Ilford (Lieut.-Colonel W. J. Burgess).
- 2nd Volunteer Battalion The Essex Regiment ; headquarters, Braintree (Colonel W. N. Tufnell).
- 3rd Volunteer Battalion The Essex Regiment ; headquarters, Plaistow (Lieut.-Colonel G. R. Birt).
- 4th Volunteer Battalion The Essex Regiment ; headquarters, Silvertown (Lieut.-Colonel H. A. Silver).

The next ten years were of steady growth in military efficiency, though there were few other changes of importance. Freiherr von Paul Rammingen, K.C.B., was for some years Honorary Colonel of the 3rd Battalion, whose headquarters were removed in 1885 from Plaistow to The Cedars, West Ham. The house was leased from the Corporation of the City of London, who had become owners when they acquired Upton Park. Viscount Cranborne, later the Marquis of Salisbury, was appointed Honorary Colonel

of the 1st Battalion in 1888 and two years afterwards the headquarters of this unit were transferred from Ilford to Brentwood. A detachment of Essex Volunteers was attached to the 4th Provisional Battalion at Aldershot in 1885, consisting of 353 of the 2nd Essex, 69 of the 1st Essex and 96 of the 3rd Essex, 518 in all. The 2nd V.B. Essex were present at Aldershot in 1887, when 55,000 troops were reviewed by the Queen in the Long Valley. At that time the 3rd Essex had five companies at West Ham, one at Bromley and two at Millwall.

The appointment of serving officers to the adjutancy of the Battalions was a change which was much appreciated. Although attachments were made from other regiments, the officers chosen usually belonged to the Essex Regiment and thus the link between the county and the regular battalions was rendered more intimate. Captain W. G. Pigott later commanded the 12th Battalion Rifle Brigade at the Battle of Loos, 1915; Captain T. Stock (Colonel Stock, C.M.G.) was lieutenant-colonel of the 2nd Essex in the South African War; Captain C. D. Bruce subsequently served with the Chinese Expeditionary Force in 1900; Captain A. C. Halahan commanded the 1st Battalion (44th) at the operations at Monchy-le-Preux, France, in 1917; Captain Tufnell (2nd) afterwards served in the South African War and for periods commanded both the regular battalions in France and Gallipoli; Captain A. P. Churchill fought in South Africa and in the Great War and later commanded the 2nd Battalion in India. Captain G. Disney's (6th) subsequent career illustrates the variety of service which was the lot of some officers in the war of 1914-1919. He went out to Gallipoli with the 6th (T.) Battalion as adjutant, then was employed with the R.A.F. and subsequently was in France, Gallipoli, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Aden and India. Captain C. R. Roberts West was in the South African and 1914-1919 campaigns and later commanded the 2nd Battalion in India (1925); Captain C. G. Orman was with the 2nd Battalion in the Nile Expedition of 1884-85; Captain O. G. Godfrey Faussett, D.S.O., was with the 1st Battalion in the South African War and fell in action at Gallipoli whilst commanding that unit in 1915; Captain C. F. de B. Boone, after serving with Chitral Relief Force and in South Africa, was killed in action with the 2nd Battalion in the early days of the war of 1914-1919.

CREATION OF A BRIGADE.

The 1st, 3rd and 4th Volunteer Battalions were brigaded in 1888, but it was not until 1892 that the change became really effective. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Volunteer Battalions were brigaded, with headquarters at Warley, under Lieut.-Colonel P. C. Yorke, who had just retired from command of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, and he was fortunate in securing the services of Major J. G. Anderson, Leicestershire Regiment, as brigade major. Unfortunately, Colonel Yorke's tenure of

command was a short one, as he died from angina pectoris, but he did a lot for the brigade in those early days. He was a smart and keen soldier and these qualities, coupled with his zeal and ability, were quickly appreciated by the officers who served under him. The spirit that he instilled permeated all ranks. The sound system of training which he initiated laid the foundation for the future efficiency of the brigade. During his tenure of command a Brigade Tactical Society was formed. Major Anderson's appointment as brigade major was happily for a much more extended period, for he served until July, 1905, a period of thirteen years, for ten years of which he was Hon. Secretary of the County Rifle Association. He was promoted lieutenant-colonel and later became a Military Knight of Windsor. He wrote of the Brigade: "I always found all ranks most keen to learn their work. They frequently had inter-company drill competitions at battalion headquarters, at which I umpired by invitation. They were a fine, soldierly body of men." The first brigade camp at Warley was on a small scale, the battalions being much below establishment, but the camps in subsequent years were attended in increasing strength. Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Brighton, Worthing, Colchester and Seaford were among the places visited. F.M. Sir Evelyn Wood was frequently the inspecting officer and he commented upon the efficiency and soldierly bearing of officers and men. Prior to the constitution of the brigade, the training had been much less systematic. Each battalion, as such, was paraded for drill three or four times a year. Other training was left very much to the zeal and initiative of the commanding officer. In the early Nineties the Easter exercise in Kent was popular, but the practice was dropped after 1893. The 2nd Volunteer Battalion, under Colonel W. N. Tufnell, went into camp annually at Aldershot and a company of the 1st Volunteer Battalion, under Captain F. Landon, would go with them. There was a good deal of intercourse between these units owing to their close identity with the more rural parts of Essex, whilst the 3rd and 4th, from their association with suburban London, naturally had interests in common. Colonel Yorke was succeeded as brigadier by Colonel J. F. Hornby, late 12th Lancers, who held the position until 1906. He carried on the system of training initiated by his predecessor. Some time before the annual camp—which was held at various centres, such as Shorncliffe, Colchester, Yarmouth and Aldershot—a printed programme of the drills and manœuvres to be carried out, together with a plan of the camp, was sent to each battalion. This plan worked well, for commanding officers knew what was to be done and the requisite preparations were made. Thus no time was lost. Colonel C. G. Brown (4th Volunteer Battalion) was an excellent supply and transport officer. The training rapidly developed in variety and interest. Two tactical accessories came into use—the cycle and the machine gun. Long

before they were officially recognized or issued to Volunteers they were in use by the Essex Battalions, having been purchased out of battalion funds. Cyclists were first attached to companies and then were grouped and formed into separate companies. The machine gun detachments were attached to headquarters, and the 1st and 2nd Volunteer Battalions each owned two Maxims, which they had purchased from their own resources. Signallers and stretcher-bearers were supplied by each Battalion, so that when they marched into camp they were well-equipped for training. The County Rifle Association was also vigorously conducted. At the annual meeting the competitors were almost entirely members of the Brigade and many became expert riflemen. The late Mr. Walter Winans, the great revolver shot, attended several of the meetings and by his tuition officers and some of the other ranks greatly improved their shooting with the short arm. Major Anderson commanded the representative detachments of Eastern Counties Volunteers at the celebration of Queen Victoria's jubilee in London on June 20th, 1897, and the brigadier, Colonel Hornby, commanded the Volunteer Division at King Edward's Coronation on August 9th, 1902, on which occasion Major Anderson was his chief staff officer. It was evident, therefore, that the staff of the Volunteer Brigade was well thought of at the War Office. To this force each Battalion of the Essex Brigade contributed one officer, one sergeant and 20 rank and file. On the occasion of the Volunteer Review by the Prince of Wales in 1899 the 3rd Essex were attached to the East London Brigade. It was about this time that the War Office ordered that the Essex Battalions should drill as line battalions and not as rifle battalions. All this active training was to be of use in emergency more quickly even than enthusiastic adherents imagined. In 1899 war ensued with the South African Republics and it was not long before the call came to the Essex Volunteers.

SERVICE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The contribution made by the four battalions towards the forces serving in South Africa was in two categories. The first was the provision of a detachment of the Regiment raised by the City of London and known as the C.I.V., and the second, the furnishing of special service companies to the 1st Battalion The Essex Regiment.

Let us first deal with the story of the Essex Volunteers with the C.I.V. On December 30th, 1899, the offer of the City of London was accepted to raise and equip a regiment consisting of artillery, infantry and mounted infantry for service in South Africa. It was decided that the Regiment should be made up of detachments from each of the London Volunteer Regiments, the personnel to consist of men not under 21 years of age, with at least two years' service and who were first-class shots. Two of the Essex Volunteer Battalions (viz., 3rd and 4th) had headquarters in London and

they were asked to supply detachments for the infantry and mounted infantry, and although the other two Essex Battalions had no association with London, they were also requested to send detachments. Hence it was that Essex Battalions supplied 106 men, as follows :—

		Inf.	M.I.
1st Volunteer Battalion	(now 4th Essex)	27	—
2nd „ „	(now 5th Essex)	25	7
3rd „ „	(now 6th Essex)	24	3
4th „ „	(now 7th Essex)	14	6

A large proportion of the men were N.C.O.'s. in their own battalions, but they willingly surrendered their stripes and joined the C.I.V. as privates. By a special arrangement with the War Office, however, all the men were kept on the strength of their own regiments whilst serving in South Africa. The majority of the Essex men were enrolled on January 4th, 1900. All the infantry were put into "E" Company, with the detachment from the Victoria and St. George's Rifles. Captain R. B. Sharpley, of the latter regiment, was in command, with Lieutenant W. J. P. Benson, 4th V.B. Essex and Lieutenant F. B. Marsh, 1st V.B. Essex as subalterns. A detachment of the Essex Artillery Volunteers also joined the C.I.V., but it was placed in another company. After inspections and musketry tests, "E" Company was completely fitted out on January 12th at the Guildhall and on the same day each man received the honorary freedom of the City of London, then attended a farewell service at St. Paul's Cathedral, and was subsequently entertained to dinner at the Inner Temple. The next day, at 7 a.m., the Company, with the two mounted infantry companies, left the headquarters of the London Rifle Brigade and after a hard struggle to pass through the enthusiastic crowds which assembled to bid them farewell, they entrained at Nine Elms Station for Southampton, where "E" Company and a mounted infantry company embarked on the "Garth Castle," which sailed for the Cape about 1.30 p.m. This vessel was the first to leave the United Kingdom with Volunteers for service in the field in South Africa, but it was not the first to arrive, for the other boat, with the rest of the mounted infantry on board, reached Cape Town a week before the "Garth Castle." During the uneventful voyage nearly all the Essex men were inoculated against typhoid fever. The date of arrival was February 4th, 1900, and whilst waiting for the remainder of the infantry, the Company were engaged in training and unloading boats. On one occasion they formed part of the guard at Government House, Cape Town, where Sir Alfred Milner was in residence. The journey up country was commenced on February 20th and there was some excitement during the first night, for the train went off the line, but fortunately no one was hurt. At Orange River "E" Company took over guard of the bridge, upon which duty they were employed for three weeks.

The Regiment then moved on to Springfontein, from which town the C.I.V. started their march to Bloemfontein, over 70 miles away. Upon reaching the Free State capital, the Regiment was sent to Glen, to form part of the 21st Brigade, then forming under Brig.-General Bruce Hamilton, and consisting of the 1st Sussex, 2nd Cameron Highlanders, 1st Notts and Derbyshires and the C.I.V. The Brigade was in General Ian Hamilton's division, which was attached to Lord Roberts' army for the march upon Johannesburg and Pretoria. The Essex detachments were under fire quite early, but it was not until they crossed the Zand River that they were seriously engaged and, fortunately, there were no casualties. In the action outside Johannesburg the C.I.V., after an eighteen miles march from Doornkop, where Dr. Jameson surrendered after the Raid, were successful in seizing their objective at a cost of twelve wounded, including one Essex man. Johannesburg was surrendered next day. In due course, Pretoria also fell to Lord Roberts' advance and the C.I.V., being the junior infantry regiment, was the last to march past Lord Roberts in Parliament Square on the afternoon of the day of entry. The Regiment was in the two days' action at Diamond Hill and it was during that engagement that some of the Essex men helped to manhaul the regimental machine guns up a hill, where it was too steep for the ponies to go, and thus enabled the guns to be brought into action. The continuous marching and fighting had a disastrous effect upon the clothing and one Essex man was reduced to walking about with a blanket wrapped round him like a kilt. Refitting took place at Heilbron. When the garrison evacuated the town the commanding officer, to avoid train-wrecking, placed in the front truck of each train some of the principal residents and widely published in the district the intimation that if any train were derailed these people would be shot. Escort duty to supply trains followed at Krugersdorp and the Regiment was afterwards in the sharp fighting round Frederickstadt, in which two men were killed and two wounded, the latter both Essex men. Following the fighting, the C.I.V. marched thirty miles in seventeen hours (including six hours of darkness) back to Bunk, where part remained as garrison and part were detached to assist the chase of de Wet round by Rustenberg. The Regiment was brought together at Pretoria and in September, 1900, the Artillery, Infantry and Mounted Infantry paraded together for the first time in South Africa, when they were inspected by Lord Roberts as Colonel-in-Chief and congratulated upon the excellent work achieved. Whilst at Pretoria "E" Company provided the customary guard at Government House, when Lord Roberts and the Queen's Company of the Grenadier Guards were away. Lady Roberts and her daughter were in residence at the time. When the British commander returned he congratulated the guard upon its excellent turn-out. The period of service expired and, therefore, early in October, 1900, the Regiment

left the Free State capital and after a tedious train journey, lasting four nights and three days, embarked upon the "Aurania" on October 7th. England was sighted some three weeks later. The Essex detachment had five men wounded in action, whilst eight died of disease, three being in the Mounted Infantry. Several also were invalided home. During their period of service the C.I.V. were over five months on the march without a halt for more than three consecutive days and the distance covered was considerably more than one thousand miles. The county men easily held their own in this long trek, which included short stays at Bloemfontein, Winberg, Lindley, Heilbron, Kronstadt, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Heidelberg. On the return to England Colonel Mackinnon, of the Grenadier Guards, who commanded the infantry portion of the Regiment, wrote the officers commanding the four Essex Volunteer Battalions in the following appreciative terms: "The men have done their duty exceedingly well and undoubtedly set a good example to the whole battalion. Where so many have done well, it is difficult to select, but certainly (then followed the names) have been among the best. These men did the whole of our thousand miles trek and, what is more, did it cheerfully." The infantry who served throughout received the Queen's South African Medal with four bars, viz., Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Johannesburg and Diamond Hill. Some of the mounted infantry were granted as many as seven bars. The following men who were in South Africa were still serving with their Battalions when the war broke out in 1914: Sergeant Cook C. Green, 4th Essex (Private in C.I.V.); Lieut. (now Major) H. T. Argent, 5th Essex (Lance-Corporal in C.I.V.); Sergeant Cook T. W. Thorpe, 5th Essex (Private in C.I.V.) and Private J. W. Crozier, 5th Essex (Private in C.I.V.). Sergeant Green was with the 4th Battalion during the war until 1919, and continued his service upon the re-formation of the Battalion—a notable record.

Early in 1900 the urgent need of reinforcements caused the War Office to make further use of the Volunteer Force. Authority was given for the formation of Special Service Companies to be attached to the regular battalions in South Africa. Accordingly the four Essex Volunteer Battalions supplied a service company, 112 strong, to the 1st Battalion, then serving with the 11th Division (Major-General Pole Carew, K.C.B.), part of the army under Lord Roberts' direction. The company was commanded by the late Major J. C. Lawrie, then Captain in the 2nd Volunteer Battalion, and the subalterns were Lieut. W. C. Bowra, 4th Volunteer Battalion, 2nd Lieut. H. E. Crocker, 1st Volunteer Battalion (now Lieut.-Colonel H. E. Crocker, C.M.G., D.S.O.) and 2nd Lieut. (now Colonel) Charles Rimington Taylor, 1st V. B. Essex. Embarkation took place at the Royal Albert Dock in the s.s. "Nineveh," on March 3rd, 1900, and the company joined the 1st Battalion at Kroonstad on May 21st. In his notes upon the

campaign, Captain A. G. Pratt, then adjutant of the 1st Battalion, paid the following tribute to the officers and men: "This Company, formed as it was of the very pick of the four Volunteer Battalions of the Essex Regiment, considerably increased the strength and efficiency of the Battalion. From the day they joined till the day they left for home at Krokodil Poort in the following October, the Company showed themselves well fitted to serve in line with any infantry in the British Army. No praise can be too high for the officers, N.C O's. and men. The 2nd Volunteer Special Service Company, which joined later, proved themselves quite equal to the first." The Volunteer Company headed the march of the 1st Essex into Johannesburg on May 31st, which unit led the Division. Pretoria was occupied early in June and whilst quartered outside the Transvaal capital the Battalion suffered heavily from enteric, among the victims being Colour Sergeant Bolden, of the Volunteer Company. The 1st Essex were part of the force which advanced along the Delagoa Railway and in the action at Belfast (August 27th, 1900) Lieut. H. E. Crocker was wounded. At Krokodil Poort on October 7th, 1900, the Volunteer Company went by rail to Pretoria in the expectation of an early departure for England. Upon leaving the 1st Battalion the commanding officer issued an order in which he referred to their good service and conduct. During the five months they had been with the 1st Essex they had marched about 500 miles and taken part in two engagements, outside Pretoria and at Belfast, and also in the operations near Diamond Hill, when the 8th Brigade were in reserve. The guerilla tactics of the Boers, however, resulted in the Company being sent to guard the gold mines at Johannesburg and then to Honing Spruit, near the Vet River, Orange River Colony, where General de Wet was causing uneasiness by his audacious raids. The Company embarked at Cape Town on May 16th, 1901, upon the "Avondale Castle," and arrived at Southampton on June 9th. They were relieved at Honing Spruit by the 2nd Volunteer Service Company, under the late Captain P. W. Cross, of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion, afterwards Lieut.-Colonel Cross, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The other officers were Lieut. F. P. P. Soper, 1st Volunteer Battalion, and Lieut. S. O. Robinson, 2nd Volunteer Battalion. With a strength of 101 other ranks, the company left the Royal Albert Dock by the s.s. "Malta," on March 23rd, 1901, for Cape Town. After five months' duty at Honing Spruit, the Company, then three officers and 91 other ranks, joined the 1st Battalion on October 17th, 1901, at Platrand, on the Standerton blockhouse line. The Company were later employed with the 1st Battalion on the Ermelo line until relieved, on April 24th, 1902, by a Volunteer Service Section (Lieut. J. F. Fitzpatrick) and 40 other ranks. The second Company sailed from Cape Town in the transport "Dilwara," on May 15th, 1902, and arrived at Southampton on June 5th. Peace with the Boers ensued soon after. The Special Service Section

left on June 15th, and embarked on the s.s. "German" on July 9th. In recognition of the assistance rendered by the Volunteer Battalions, they were accorded the privilege of bearing "South Africa" upon their colours.

THE YEARS BETWEEN.

From 1892 onwards there were a number of changes in the command of the four Battalions. In the year mentioned Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Brown became lieut.-colonel of the 4th Volunteer Battalion and Lieut.-Colonel W. Howard of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion; a year later Colonel J. W. Benningfield was gazetted to the 4th Volunteer Battalion; then Colonel F. Landon to the 1st Volunteer Battalion in 1895. Lieut.-Colonel H. Palmer succeeded to the command of the 3rd in 1896 in succession to Lieut.-Colonel Atherton (1892). Thus in 1898 the Battalions were distributed as under:—

1st Volunteer Battalion,	Brentwood,	Lieut.-Colonel F. Landon.
2nd " "	Colchester,	Lieut.-Colonel W. Howard.
3rd " "	West Ham,	Lieut.-Colonel H. Palmer.
4th " "	Silvertown,	Lieut.-Colonel J. W. Benningfield.

The battalion commanders changed considerably during the next eight years and the following appointments were made: 1900—3rd Battalion, Lieut.-Colonel W. H. D. Aston Lewis; 4th, Lieut.-Colonel J. R. Parkington, afterwards Sir J. Roper Parkington, Honorary Colonel. 1901—1st, Lieut.-Colonel R. H. Lyon, later in the same year appointed Honorary Colonel. 3rd, Lieut.-Colonel J. Brooker Ward. 1903—2nd, Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Coleman. 1904—1st, Lieut.-Colonel C. H. F. Christie. 1905—4th, Lieut.-Colonel G. T. B. Cobbett.

COLONEL HARRY COOPER'S COMMAND.

The year 1906 was notable in the annals of the movement in Essex, for it was then that Colonel Harry Cooper, C.M.G., C.B.E., was appointed to the command of the brigade. An Essex boy, he was educated at Brentwood Grammar School. Entering the 98th Foot as an ensign, he had seen varied service in all parts of the world and in various capacities. His campaigns included Canada, Ashanti, Burmah, Sudan and South Africa, 1881, whilst he had also been British Vice Consul in Bosnia and Asia Minor, A.D.C. to the Viceroy in India, Chief Staff Officer, Army of Occupation, Egypt, and A.A.G. Western District. Subsequent to his tenure of command of the Essex Infantry Brigade, he was attached to G.H.Q. of the British Expeditionary Force in France. The interest of a keen soldier, with wide experience, was thus quickened by the natural desire which he had as an Essex man to ensure that nothing should be left undone to make the Brigade as efficient as circumstances would permit. The county owes him a great debt for the splendid work which he performed in those transition years, when the

Volunteer was being transformed into the Territorial, a period of considerable difficulty and anxiety. Colonel Cooper's concern for the Essex Brigade never slackened and after he had retired he continued to render valuable aid as Vice-Chairman of the Essex Territorial Force Association. When he took over command the Battalions and headquarters were :—

1st	Volunteer Battalion,	Brentwood,	Colonel C. H. F. Christie.
2nd	"	"	Colechester, Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Coleman.
3rd	"	"	West Ham, Colonel J. Brooker Ward.
4th	"	"	Hackney, for Leyton, Colonel J. W. Benningfield.

Each Battalion was still administered independently. The 1st and 2nd Battalions were clothed in the green uniforms of riflemen. The 3rd and 4th Battalions had adopted scarlet, the former in 1895 and the latter in 1902. Recruit and company training was carried out at detachment, company or battalion headquarters as facilities offered, with battalion drill occasionally on half holidays. Musketry, supposed to be undertaken in the non-training period, was a great difficulty, owing to the lack of range accommodation. The 4th had to fire on ranges at Wraysbury, near Staines, and on two occasions special permission had to be obtained for the 3rd Battalion to fire on ranges near camp during the annual training. The latter had previously practised upon an underground range at headquarters, which was one hundred yards in length and upon which the Battalion was permitted to do class firing. Its use for this purpose was abolished when the Territorial Force was instituted. Practice upon miniature ranges accustomed recruits to handle their rifles and ammunition. The County Rifle Association, as in previous years, did much to raise the standard by the improved marksmanship attained by keen rivalry between Battalions. The winning of the County Challenge Cup at Bisley in 1905 by a team of Essex Volunteers under Captain Kittoe, 3rd Volunteer Battalion, gave a great impetus to rifle shooting in Essex, which was further helped by the successes achieved by first-rate marksmen, notably Sergeants Nightingale (father and son), of Manningtree, Tippins and Lockwood and Private Fox. In 1912 4th Class Chaplain J. G. Fenn, 5th Battalion (formerly 2nd Volunteer Battalion) The Essex Regiment was silver medallist in the King's Competition at Bisley, being only one point behind the winner of the gold medal. At the same meeting the Essex team was second in the inter-county rifle championship, being beaten by the County of London by ten points, 755 to 745. Of the pre-Territorial period of command Colonel Harry Cooper has written: "Keen Volunteers went to week-end camps, which were most useful to both officers and men. War games and occasional staff rides were also used as a means of instruction to officers, who were encouraged to attend one or other of the schools of instruction. The annual camp was a great event in the Volunteer year, but it only lasted seven

days, generally about August Bank Holiday, and was chiefly devoted to battalion work. The units were fairly up to establishment in officers and men. The latter were of a good stamp and the officers were gentlemen keen, as a rule, on their military duties. The battalions were on a level as regards efficiency. Possibly the 3rd and 4th were steadier at drill owing to the greater opportunities for assembly, but the 1st and 2nd made up for this by the fact that the intimacy of their daily occupations enabled them to get quickly into touch when brought together for military work. The C.O.'s were qualified for their positions and were well supported by adjutants and permanent staff. The brigade staff, Major H. W. W. Wood, late West Riding Regiment, Brigade Major, and Lieut.-Colonel G. C. Brown, 4th Volunteer Battalion, supply and transport officer, had both been with the Brigade during previous annual trainings and knew its requirements. The Brigade was self-contained, as each battalion had a detachment of cyclists and a certain number of all ranks trained to A.S.C. duties and others to hospital duties. My first camp in 1906, at Broadwater, near Worthing, was arranged by the staff without any outside aid and ran very smoothly, but it only lasted seven days. Next year the Brigade went to Colchester, where, in the absence of the regulars, it camped on the rifle ranges. Colchester was not a popular place for the camp and the attendance was small, but some useful work was put in and the Brigade was inspected by Lord Methuen, G.O.C.-in-C. Eastern Command. I learnt much during those two years with the Volunteers, but what struck me most was the necessity for combining work with play if one was to get the best out of the Brigade. The best Volunteers were the busiest men in civil life and the annual camp took up the greater part of their holiday. Keen Volunteers as many of them were, the majority wanted to get near the sea and, if possible, within reach of some place of amusement when off duty. The majority of both officers and men had to be hardened when they came up. It was as much a necessity to get them physically fit as to teach them military duties."

The Territorial Army came into being in 1908, but the annual training in that year was held too soon after the change to affect the arrangements. The camp, however, was not well attended, but the site on the Downs, near Brighton, was good, with excellent facilities for exercise. The East Surrey Brigade lay alongside the Essex. A Yeomanry Brigade was also encamped in the neighbourhood and, with the Field Artillery quartered in Brighton, the Brigade was given the opportunity of co-operating with other arms of the Service.

INAUGURATION OF THE TERRITORIAL FORCE.

With the return from camp, however, the re-formation of the Essex units was vigorously undertaken, under the direction of the Essex County Territorial Force Association, of which the

Lord Lieutenant (the Earl of Warwick) was President and Brig.-General R. B. Colvin, C.B., was Chairman, with Major-General F. F. Johnson as Secretary, an officer of considerable experience and whose tact and administrative capacity had much to do with the successful negotiation of a difficult transition period. Hitherto the Volunteer Force had been mainly supported by its own contributions and was, to some extent, self-governed. Lord Haldane changed this system in many important particulars. He extended the period of the annual camp from seven to fourteen days, attendance being compulsory on eight days. Military law was introduced and pay and allowances similar to the Regular Army were given when the Territorials were in camp or receiving instruction. The military authorities were responsible for training, but administration (i.e., recruiting, clothing, housing and ranges) was in the hands of the County Territorial Association. There were considerable changes in organization brought about in some part by the constitution of the East Anglian Division. The Essex Brigade of that Division was found by the four Essex infantry battalions. When the European War broke out the Division was numbered the 54th and the Brigade the 161st. They were numbered after the New Army units, which was unfortunate, for had they been given priority they would now follow more closely in numerical order to the Regular formations. Divisional Artillery Ammunition Column, A.S.C., R.A.M.C., and other units had also to be recruited, as well as an Electrical Engineer Company, R.E. Thus it was that the cyclist detachments were withdrawn from the battalions and with those from Suffolk formed into the Essex and Suffolk Cyclist Battalion. This caused the Saffron Walden corps to drop their old connection with the Cambridge Volunteer Battalion, whilst the Waltham Abbey corps also ceased to be part of the Hertford Battalion and were incorporated with the Essex infantry. In 1911 the Suffolk companies were separated from Essex and the county companies formed the nucleus of the 8th Battalion The Essex Regiment (Cyclists). The 7th Battalion also lost in 1912 a valuable recruiting area by its separation from Hackney, the local companies being transferred to the 10th County of London Regiment. For this reason Colonel G. T. B. Cobbett, V.D., and Major E. J. Walker were gazetted to the new Hackney Battalion. The men trained to A.S.C. duties were withdrawn and formed the nucleus of the East Anglian Mounted Brigade Supply and Transport Column and Essex Brigade Company, R.A.S.C. The trained hospital men were transferred from the Brigade and became part of the 3rd East Anglian Field Ambulance. The artillery not only included field and siege batteries, but also horse and heavy batteries. The total number of officers and men required for the various units in 1908 was 7,001 (240 officers and 6,761 other ranks). On April 30th 149 officers and 1,735 N.C.O.'s and men had signed the agreement to undertake four years' service in the Territorial Force.

The transformation from Volunteer to Territorial was effected in different ways, and that by which the 3rd Volunteer Battalion became the 6th Battalion The Essex Regiment had an element of the dramatic. The Battalion paraded in strength at 11 p.m. on the eve of the appointed day and as the clock struck midnight the Last Post was sounded. The men were ordered to lay down their arms. Those who intended to attest for the Territorial Force fell out to the left of companies and the remainder, having picked up their arms, marched to the armoury and handed in their rifles. The recruits were duly attested and then, forming in companies to the number of three hundred, they marched round the streets of Stratford, headed by both bands. The men had a generous supply of refreshments upon return and officers and sergeants sat down at 3 a.m. to a well-earned breakfast. Thus was the 6th Battalion born.

By February 28th, 1909, the County strength stood at 185 officers and 5,425 other ranks, leaving only 55 officers and 1,336 to complete establishment. Before October of that year the deficiency had been reduced to 24 officers and 664 other ranks. Formal recognition was given when 30 per cent. of the personnel was enlisted and by October, 1909, it was reported that all units had been recognized, special tribute being paid to the recruiting activity of Major (later Lieut.-Colonel) F. Taylor, of the 5th Battalion The Essex Regiment. F.M. Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C., Honorary Colonel of the 5th Battalion, also manifested a keen and helpful interest in the new movement. At the meeting of the Essex Territorial Force Association in June, 1910, the Chairman asked the members to look back with pride upon the work which had been accomplished in two years. The Territorial Force came into being on April 1st, 1908, but the men were allowed until June 30th to decide whether they would transfer. The strength of the Volunteer Force at the latter date was 2,241, exclusive of officers, belonging to six units. In two years those six units had been expanded to 22, representing six arms of the Service. Their total strength was now 218 officers (92.4 per cent. of establishment) and 6,183 other ranks (90.2 per cent.). The Association were also responsible for over one hundred freehold or leasehold properties throughout the County, of which the estimated value was over £60,000, whilst schemes were being considered for new or improved drill halls involving an expenditure of £26,000. There were also nine rifle ranges in existence. Several voluntary aid detachments had been raised and a corps of guides enrolled.

The changes were extensive, for not only had recruiting areas to be allotted, but a considerable re-arrangement of companies was necessary in respect of the infantry battalions, this although it was wisely decided to interfere with the previous system as little as possible. Advantage was taken of the change, however, to allot outlying companies to battalions which had the most accessible headquarters, so as to facilitate mobilization. This was not always possible to the extent that was wished, as in the



His Majesty King Edward VII presented Colours to the 6th Battalion at Windsor, June 19th, 1909.

Colour Party.

<i>Colour-Sergt. Borkett,</i>	<i>Colour-Sergt. Pearson,</i>
<i>Lieut. P. D. Castle,</i>	<i>Second-Lieut. C. L. Kempton</i>
<i>Instructor of Musketry (King's Colour),</i>	<i>(Regimental Colour).</i>

case of the 6th Battalion, which had an outlying company with headquarters at Southend, whilst the area of the 4th Battalion was extended to include Dengie Hundred, with the headquarters of a company at Southminster.

THE ESSEX INFANTRY BRIGADE.

The headquarters of the Brigade were established at Epping Place, the residence of Major H. W. W. Wood, the brigade major, and in 1909, the Regular, Militia and Territorial Battalions having been numbered consecutively, the four old Volunteer Battalions were thus designated: 1st Volunteer Battalion, 4th (T.F.) Battalion The Essex Regiment; 2nd Volunteer Battalion, the 5th; 8rd Volunteer Battalion, the 6th, and 4th Volunteer Battalion, the 7th. The battalion commanders and headquarters were:—

4th—Lieut.-Colonel J. E. Windus, V.D., Brentwood for Ilford.

5th—Colonel Percy Adams, V.D., Colchester.

6th—Colonel J. B. Ward, V.D., The Cedars, West Ham.

7th—Colonel G. T. B. Cobbett, V.D., Leyton.¹

The 6th Battalion were fortunate in being the only infantry battalion whose headquarters were not changed under the new system. The Cedars, West Ham, the old home of Elizabeth Fry, standing in its own grounds upon the outskirts of Upton Park, afforded good accommodation and when the alterations were completed a very creditable centre was opened by the Permanent Under Secretary of State for War (Sir E. W. D. Ward, K.C.B., K.C.V.O.) in May, 1913. Their colours were presented to the 6th by King Edward VII, at Windsor, in June, 1909. By the foresight of a former commanding officer (Colonel F. Landon, V.D.), the 4th Battalion possessed a valuable site in Gordon Grounds, Ilford, with space to parade a battalion. Headquarters accommodation was erected by the County Association, which was first used when the Marchioness of Salisbury, wife of the Hon. Colonel of the Battalion, presented the colours on June 11th, 1910. They were borne by Lieuts. Tyler and Gowan, who were among the first to fall after the Battalion landed on Gallipoli in August, 1915. Entirely new premises had to be built at Chelmsford for the 5th Battalion, which also included the administrative headquarters of the County Association. The opening ceremony was performed by Lord Haldane in October, 1911, and was attended by detachments from the eight battalions of the Essex Regiment as well as representatives from all the other units in the county. A distinguished visitor of the day was Major-General Cowans, afterwards to win renown as the Quartermaster General who supplied the requirements of the mighty army employed in the war of 1914-1919. The 7th Battalion was presented with its colours by Earl Roberts on Hackney Downs on August 29th, 1911. The Field Marshal made special reference to the fact

1. The last-named Battalion had three companies at Hackney, two each at Leyton and Walthamstow and one at Silvertown.

that the 7th Battalion contributed 136 officers and men to the Volunteer companies serving with the 1st Essex in South Africa. When in 1912 the Hackney companies were removed to the London area, the Battalion was concentrated at Walthamstow, there being no outlying drill stations. The new headquarters there were opened in November, 1913, by Major-General F. S. Inglefield, C.B., D.S.O., G.O.C. East Anglian Division. Headquarters, both battalion and company, varied in size, for some served to accommodate more than one unit, but at each centre it was sought to provide a drill hall, office and store accommodation, with quarters for permanent staff and, if possible, rooms for recreation and a miniature rifle range. Although slow at first, recruiting for the infantry battalions gradually improved. The men were not all of the type of the old Volunteer, for some were attracted because of the compulsory camp with the increased pay and allowances, but all ranks took kindly to the demand for more concentration upon individual efficiency and mostly became excellent soldiers. By December 24th, 1909, the strength of battalions approached establishment, as the following list will show:—

Establishment.		Personnel.	
Officers.	Other Ranks.	Officers.	Other ranks.
4th—28	1,018	22	775
5th—29	993	27	946
6th—28	978	28	815
7th—28	978	29	941

The administrative training grants by divisional headquarters gave not only more liberal financial aid for week-end camps, war games, lectures, etc., but the interest the staff personally took in the instruction of the brigades and battalions helped materially to increase efficiency. The old Volunteer officer had done good service by attending schools of instruction and the Territorial officers were more liberally encouraged to do the same.

The camp of the Essex Territorial Brigade in 1908 was at Broadwater, near Worthing, and was most successful. The weather was good and the camp standing for fourteen days gave a chance to all to put in the compulsory eight days' training. August Bank Holiday came in the middle of the period and was responsible for a large muster over that week-end. The transport was limited, but by pooling it each battalion was moved out for 24 hours. The extensive and varied training ground at disposal permitted each battalion to proceed in a different direction and bivouac. The return to camp on the following morning provided an "enemy" to exercise the other three battalions in attack or defence. Major-General H. Campbell, commanding the East Anglian Division, visited the camp, with his staff officer, Major Romer (later Director of Staff Duties at the War Office). He gave the 6th Battalion, who were at musketry, some practical instruction on the ranges, which were at Portslade, Brighton. General Sir Arthur Paget, C.I.C., Eastern Command, inspected the Brigade in the field and F.M. Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C., spent

some time with the 5th Battalion. Worthing was a popular rendezvous when the men were off duty and in return for the hospitality of the town, the Brigade gave a tattoo one night in the Public Gardens. The Y.M.C.A. tent, with its voluntary helpers, was, as at other camps, much appreciated by all ranks. Increased attention was given throughout the year to musketry and the opening of the enlarged ranges at Purfleet gave further opportunities for target practice to Territorials, whilst the standing camp on the ranges was a boon at week-ends.

In 1909 the battalions of the Essex Brigade went into separate camps for training. The 6th were sent to Shoeburyness; the 5th to Dovercourt; the 4th and 7th to Landguard, where the three latter, with the 4th and 5th Battalions The Suffolk Regiment formed part of the Harwich garrison. This was done in order that the battalions of the Brigade should become acquainted with their war stations. During the last part of the training Harwich was put in a state of defence and the Commandant assumed command of the troops. Towards the end of the week information was received that an enemy—represented by the Essex Yeomanry, a battery of R.H.A. and the East Midland Brigade—was threatening the garrison from Woodbridge and the four infantry battalions from Landguard were ordered to intercept them and, if possible, hold them up. The infantry marched to Bucklesham and then bivouacked for the night. Early next morning they came in contact with the enemy near Brightwell and were forced to retire, taking up a defensive line north of Trimley from the Orwell to the Deben. Reinforcements arrived during the evening, including the 5th Battalion from Dovercourt and some mobile artillery. The morning after the conclusion of operations the G.O.C. East Anglian Division (Major-General H. Campbell) held a conference at Felixstowe. A notable event in 1910 was that Brigadier-General the Hon Julian Byng—destined to become Lord Byng of Vimy and one of the most distinguished generals of the war of 1914-1919—took over the command of the East Anglian Division. He gave much valuable instruction to the brigades and battalions during the non-training period by lectures and staff rides, which he personally conducted. The staff rides held by General Sir Arthur Paget, commanding the Eastern District, at Crowborough and Norwich were also appreciated by the senior Territorial officers who had the privilege of attendance. General Byng was succeeded by Major-General Sir C. V. F. Townshend, later to be known to fame as the defender of Kut during the Mesopotamian campaign. In 1910 the Battalions again went for training to their war stations—4th and 7th to Landguard, 5th to Dovercourt and 6th to Shoeburyness. It is worthy of recall that “F” Company (Captain Ward) occupied Landwick Barn, Shoeburyness, in the second week, the same place that this officer took over with “C” Company upon the outbreak of war in August, 1914.

In the Spring of 1911, to his own regret and to the very great regret of the Essex men, his tenure of command having expired, Colonel Cooper handed over the Brigade to the charge of Colonel E. S. Bulfin. "My five years," wrote Colonel Cooper, "covered the period of transition from Volunteers to Territorials and was most interesting. But whether Volunteers or Territorials, most of the work of raising, training and keeping up to the mark devolved on the commanding officers of battalions and I was much indebted to them. I was particularly fortunate in the Brigade Major (Major H. W. W. Wood), who was with the Brigade before I joined and stayed on to the end of my term. His previous experience was of the greatest help. To Major Guy Gold, Essex Yeomanry, and Captain Percy Ridley, 5th Battalion, who were my orderly officers through successive trainings, I was very grateful, for they were always cheery and ready for any duty. Officers and all other ranks throughout the Brigade were imbued with a good county *esprit de corps*. They were very proud of being allowed to wear the uniform and of being associated with such a distinguished regiment as the Essex. I am very glad that on more than one occasion, in the early days of the Territorial Force, I was able to give public expression of my confidence in the future of the Essex Brigade. Their ardour was sorely tried at the opening of the Great War, when preference was given to newly raised service battalions, but in the later stages of that conflict the Essex Territorials amply proved their value in the field. I must not forget, too, the excellent work done by the County Association under the capable direction of their Chairman, Brig.-General R. B. Colvin, C.B., and the Secretary, Major-General F. F. Johnson, C.B. They were always ready to help commanding officers and further the interests of the units concerned. That so much was done with the limited means at their disposal speaks volumes for the administration." The Essex infantry were also fortunate in the officers who succeeded Colonel Cooper in charge of the Brigade. Colonel E. S. Bulfin (later General Sir E. S. Bulfin, K.C.B., C.V.O., Colonel of the Yorkshire Regiment) was only in command for two years—from June, 1911, to June, 1913—when he became commander of the 2nd Brigade, at Aldershot, but during that time he impressed all ranks with his personality and keen military spirit. He was destined to take the 2nd Brigade to France, later to lead the 28th Division and afterwards the 60th Division in France, and then to become commander of the XXI Corps from August, 1917, to November, 1919, serving with distinction in the campaign in Palestine. The Agadir incident in 1911 had caused renewed concern that mobilization arrangements should be kept up-to-date. They were continually revised during General Bulfin's term as brigadier and so strict were the orders in this respect that no adjutant could go upon annual leave until his mobilization orders had been approved by headquarters. General Bulfin was followed in the Essex Brigade by Colonel S. T. B. Lawford,

of the Royal Fusiliers (later Sir S. T. B. Lawford, K.C.B.), who was in command during mobilization in 1914 and then left, in September, to become brigadier of the 22nd Brigade serving in France. He subsequently was in command of the 41st Division, which he held from September, 1915, until 1919, when he was appointed a divisional commander in the British Army of the Rhine. After the war he was a brigade commander at headquarters, India, and then was gazetted G.O.C. Lahore District, Northern Command.

The units of the East Anglian Division trained together for the first time in 1911 in the neighbourhood of Thetford, Norfolk. In 1912 the Brigade camp was at Shorncliffe; in 1913 at Maldon and in 1914 at Clacton. During these years there were changes in battalion command, the following officers being promoted: 1911—5th, Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Welch; 6th, Lieut.-Colonel R. F. Wall; 1912—7th, Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Hearn. 1913—4th, Lieut.-Colonel A. R. Meggy, V.D. Upon Lieut.-Colonel Welch taking over command of the 5th Battalion, the headquarters were removed from Colchester to Chelmsford.

Strenuous efforts were made to maintain the battalions at establishment, but they were not fully successful. In June, 1914, on the eve of the outbreak of war, the numbers needed to complete the Brigade were 24 officers and 1,031 other ranks, the strength of the battalions being: 4th Battalion—30 officers and 902 other ranks; 5th Battalion—26 officers and 848 other ranks; 6th Battalion—29 officers and 743 other ranks; 7th Battalion—24 officers and 783 other ranks.

Then came the grave days of July, 1914, with greater and graver events to follow. The early stages of the crisis are thus described by the Secretary of the County Territorial Association: "At 2 a.m. on July 30th I received information from our office that orders had been received for the Special Service Section of the Essex (Fortress) R.E. to be called up and sent on to Harwich. Forty men were despatched by train at 9 a.m., on July 30th, and 11 more at 3 p.m., leaving nine men, who were at the time absent from the country, to join later. This, I think, was a very creditable mobilization. During the same day it was learned that the special service sections of the Essex Yeomanry and the 8th (Cyclist) Battalion The Essex Regiment had been called out. On the 31st July an urgent telegram from Eastern Command was received asking that the names of men of the National Reserve selected for duty at horse depots at Colchester and Warley might be supplied to G.O.s.C. at these places within twelve hours. The lists of these men were almost complete and, thanks to the energy of Captain Tufnell and Colonel Gilbertson Smith, the complete lists were handed over within a few hours. On Friday, the 31st, I proceeded to the camp of the Essex Infantry Brigade and had a useful consultation with Colonel Lawford and his commanding officers, when we renewed the arrangements made for purchasing those articles of equipment which had to be procured from

civilian sources on mobilization and the method by which the clothing required for men joining to complete establishment would be assured." Upon the outbreak of war the distribution of the Battalions was as follows:—

4th Battalion.—Lieut.-Colonel A. R. Meggy. Headquarters, Ilford. Company headquarters: "A," Romford; "B," Manor Park; "C," Ilford; "D," Barking; "E," Woodford; "F," Southminster; "G," Ongar; "H," Hornchurch.

5th Battalion.—Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Welch. Headquarters, Chelmsford. Company headquarters: "A" and "B," Chelmsford; "C," Colchester; "D," Manningtree; "E," Halstead; "F," Braintree; "G," Maldon; "H," Clacton.

6th Battalion.—Lieut.-Colonel R. F. Wall. Headquarters, West Ham. Company headquarters, "A" to "G," West Ham; "H," Prittlewell (Southend), with a signal section at Grays.

7th Battalion.—Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Hearn. Headquarters, Walthamstow. No outlying companies.

Recruiting was immediately active and second line and even third line units were quickly formed. By May, 1915, when the Brigade was preparing for warfare overseas, there were serving in the four battalions and reserve units 270 officers and 7,851 men, including imperial service and home service categories and those unable to proceed abroad owing to age and medical classification.





4th Battalion.



5th Battalion.



6th Battalion.



7th Battalion

Battalion Flashes of the 161st Brigade, 54th Division.
(Right Arm Badges shown. The Red is worn to the front on both arms).



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Copy of telegram received by O.C., 6th Essex, ordering mobilization.

THE WAR, 1914-1919.

MOBILIZATION : DUTY ON THE EAST COAST.

The Essex Brigade started its fortnight's annual training at Clacton on July 27th, 1914, and carried out the first week's work according to programme. The first intimation that European events were taking a grave turn came on July 31st, when the Adjutants were summoned to Brigade headquarters to produce their standing mobilization orders. On Saturday, August 1st, Captain Landon was recalled from camp to take up flying duties. Then on Sunday those men who had been embodied for seven days returned to their homes and upon that day men joining for the second week reported for duty. The international situation was black indeed. Upon that fateful Sunday before Bank Holiday, we are told, "Clacton was full of visitors, with whom the men of our brigade mingled, and we were invested with unusual importance by reason of the public notices that people approaching the seaplane station at Jay Wick ran a risk of being shot by sentries; this, together with certain departures from the camp of officers to regular units and the fact that we had to find armed guards with ball ammunition, led us to realize that this might be a long fifteen days' camp." On Bank Holiday tents were struck at 4 a.m.. Red coats were packed and sent to store, none realizing that their day was over and that not even after the war was the red coat to be universally worn again. The 7th Battalion left in the morning for Walthamstow to await orders; the 6th proceeded to West Ham and Southend; the 5th had been ordered to Chelmsford, but this was countermanded and they marched at 3 p.m. for Dovercourt, followed shortly afterwards by the 4th, who had been ordered to Felixstowe. The Brigade Signal Section, part of the Divisional Signal Company, commanded by Lieut. E. A. Loftus, which had been attached to "H" Company, of the 6th Essex, left Clacton, with a strength of an officer and eighteen other ranks, on cycles, at 3 p.m., reached Harwich at 4.45 p.m., drew camp equipment and slept for the night on tables or on the floor of the Fort. Next day they crossed to Landguard and were attached to the 4th Essex for a few hours, after which they proceeded to Brigade headquarters in Lower Walton Street, just outside Felixstowe. This Signal Section, recruited almost entirely from ex-cadets of Palmer's School, Grays, had been originally raised as the signalling section of the 6th Battalion, but it had done so well in the classification tests in 1914 that it became the Brigade Signal Section and Lieut. Loftus the Brigade Signalling Officer. In November, 1914, a reserve section was raised at Grays and these were also mostly ex-cadets of Palmer's School. The

signallers were later transferred to the R.E., but remained attached to the 161st Brigade throughout the war.

The 4th Essex left Clacton by route march after the 5th Essex. "It was seventeen miles to Harwich, along a twisting road under a warm sun. The men were in full marching order, with the old-fashioned bandolier equipment, and each signpost seemed to say we had farther to go than the last one. At last we were passing through Dovercourt and the 5th Battalion (who bivouacked in the vicinity of the schools) gave us some cheers that acted like a tonic. And so to Harwich. The town was glowing with excitement, the Fleet had steam up, and as we marched through the crowds cheered us, the often-ridiculed 'Saturday afternoon soldiers.'" The seventeen miles, including halts, had taken 5 hours 35 minutes and only six men had fallen out. It was dark when the ferry was reached. The Orwell was safely crossed with the men packed like sardines in the ferry boat, and the Battalion marched to Landguard flats, where one company went on outpost duty and the remainder rested as best they could. On Tuesday, August 4th—at 11 p.m. that day a state of war ensued with Germany—mobilization papers were handed to all ranks. Those not in camp were summoned to the colours, and the Essex Battalions were thus formally placed upon a war footing. By this time all ranks were in possession of ball ammunition. The 5th Essex were allotted their areas along the pre-arranged defensive line just west of Dovercourt, and work upon the defences was undertaken until the following Sunday. The men worked under active service conditions and found the labour almost as arduous as any during the war. The Battalion was completed during August 4th and 5th by the arrival of those men who had returned home after a week's duty in camp and those who had been excused attendance thereat. Major Fred Taylor and Colour Sergeant Instructor H. Shonk returned to Chelmsford to organize the Battalion depot, where they were later joined by other members of the permanent staff. An officer's guard, under Lieut. E. D. H. Willmott, was detailed during the week to take charge of German prisoners of war at Shotley. It was probably one of the first detachments of the British Army to be charged with this duty. The 4th Essex were equally busy, but the chief memory of that time was a fighting speech which a well-known officer is said to have made to his "Barking Bulldogs."

On Wednesday morning, August 5th, the 4th Essex marched into Felixstowe and took over the defences at 4 a.m., the headquarters being Ordnance Hotel, Garrison Road. The brigade headquarters were at Orwell House, Lower Walton Street. The brigadier was Colonel Lawford; brigade major, Major Fergus, D.S.O., and staff captain, Captain Butler Harris. Troops were constantly arriving and in addition to the 4th Essex at Felixstowe there were soon in the vicinity part of the 7th Essex at Manor House; 4th Suffolks at Old Felixstowe; 5th

Suffolks, Lavender Cottages; 2nd Essex Battery, Langley's Farm; 3rd Suffolk Battery, West End Garage; 1st East Anglian Field Company, R.E., Langfield Fort, Beach Road West; half sub-section, Essex Ammunition Column with the 2nd Essex Battery. The other half section was at Felixstowe Dock. Guards were placed at the junction of Walton Lower Street and Mill Lane, Mill Lane and Garrison Road, Princes Road and Orwell Road, South Hill and Undercliff Road West and a fifth at the Promenade and Pier. The 4th Essex outposts were at Battalion headquarters, Ordnance Hotel, White Coons Pavilion, Pier Gardens, Q Tower Post, Goyfield House, the Vicarage and Ferry Hill Redoubt. Brigade headquarters had a strenuous time. Messages were constantly coming through and three-hour watches were maintained day and night on the telephone. Civilians were only allowed to go in and out of the defence lines between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. with passes and no permission was given during the night hours. Not the least exacting of the duties of the Staff Captain was to question applicants and satisfy himself that they were entitled to a pass. "It was understood," writes an ex-member of the 4th Essex, "that the authorities considered this part of the coast a danger spot, partly owing to the proximity of Harwich and partly owing to the flatness of the coast and the suspected number of spies, all of which would have assisted a landing. At 4.30 a.m. on August 5th we started clearing some obstructions round the White Coon Post (called after a concert party using the Pier Gardens) and at 6 a.m. a maid was sent down by her mistress to ask the officer to tell his men to make a little less noise, as it disturbed her rest. The horrors of war had started already! The White Coons arrived at 8.30 a.m. to find their concert hall, which they had shut up at 11 o'clock on the previous night, occupied by troops and the surroundings being put in a state of defence, but they took it like sportsmen. Meanwhile, trenches were being dug by companies on the slopes behind the town. It has been stated that we were the first to dig defensive trenches in England. The steamer service was, of course, stopped and the pier closed. The pier secretary handed over his office for use as company headquarters, and also hundreds of tiny pots of jam, a welcome addition to rations. The shops on the parade were closed, a confectioner handing over all his stock, and one soon learnt the gentle art of 'serounging.' The inhabitants of Felixstowe were somewhat surprised and alarmed, but helped as much as they could, though we heard there was almost a panic at the station with visitors and others trying to get away. The promenade and many main roads were closed, and one remembers the indignation of a worthy top-hatted councillor, who was held up at the point of the bayonet by a very youthful sentry, and prevented from walking along his own promenade. Two or three real spies were caught and many imaginary ones were seen. Two of the latter variety were shot at (and missed) one night, but as they eventually

turned out to be pigs, the only loss was some good pork. Life was very strenuous during the whole period, and three or four hours' sleep in twenty-four was about the maximum. Trenches had to be sited and dug, machine gun emplacements prepared (no machine guns ever arrived), range cards made, fields of fire cleared of obstruction, telephonic communication established and many other things which we had often practised, but now felt we were doing with a purpose. We soon learnt the mixed joys of visits from 'Brass Hats'; first one came and complimented us on our work, and then the next visitor would not be so kind, and so on. Many humorous incidents occurred—the diminutive pair of ladies' opera glasses brought in by a zealous patrol owing to the order that people continuing to use field glasses were to have them confiscated; the photographer who reported a company commander to the War Office for the confiscation of a camera, resulting in reams and reams of correspondence. Finally, on the morning of Sunday, August 9th, the special reserve unit of the Bedfordshires, which had been busy mobilizing during the previous few days, marched in and took over from us. When trenches, emplacements, look-outs, stores, etc., had been handed over, we marched to the station, and the writer remembers a decent meal and a sleep (the first of either for some days), and being suddenly awakened from a dream in which the Germans were busy landing. So ended our stay at Felixstowe." Whilst the 4th and 7th Essex were being relieved by the 3rd Herts. and Beds., the 5th were handing over to the 3rd Essex at Harwich.

The 6th Essex mobilized at the Cedars, West Ham, and they were congratulated upon the celerity with which it was accomplished. The first state was that of tension and then of concentrated activity. The Battalion arrived back on August Bank Holiday, where the men were dismissed to their homes, whilst the headquarters staff remained continuously on duty at the Cedars. The orders did not arrive by the morning's post on August 4th, as expected, but a telegram was delivered at 8 o'clock in the evening, upon which the mobilization notices, which had been previously prepared, were completed and the Battalion ordered to parade at 8 o'clock the following morning. So keen was the spirit that the greater number of the men were at the Cedars before that hour, for the news had leaked out ahead of the postman's delivery. On August 5th £5,000 was paid to the men and the Post Office sent up clerks to assist in the transmission of the money to the relatives. The regimental reserve of ammunition was distributed and each man was handed a hundred rounds. Identity discs, giving the man's name, number and regiment, were issued, the necessary details having been stamped thereon after the receipt of the telegram. On the afternoon of August 5th the Battalion entrained at Plaistow for Shoeburyness. On the way detachments were dropped at Thames Haven oilworks and Coalhouse Fort. "H" (Southend)

Company had proceeded direct to the war station and in the morning took over from the 2nd Border Regiment. During the five days at Shoeburyness, horses, previously registered, were purchased in Southend; also transport vehicles, including water carts from the Corporation. Thus the Battalion became mobile. A considerable amount of work upon field fortification was done. When the Essex Battalion departed on August 9th they were replaced by the 3rd Borders. The 7th Essex also mobilized at Walthamstow on August 5th and proceeded to Suffolk on August 7th. Six of the companies were stationed at Landguard Fort and Felixstowe, and "G" and "H" Companies at Harwich.

Not the least valuable service rendered by the Territorials at the outbreak of the war was the fact that, being in camp, they were immediately available for duty or were mobilized so rapidly that they were on the coast well before the time expected and waiting for relief by the Special Reserve Battalions. The promptitude with which the 6th Essex arrived at Shoeburyness enabled the Experimental Department to carry on, for had they had to provide guards, the all important proofing of ammunition for the army in the field would have been delayed.

The Territorial Force was raised purely for home defence and volunteers for foreign service in case of war were classed in a special section, being allowed to wear a white metal bar, on which was inscribed "Imperial Service." The idea was that these men would be available as reinforcements of the regular battalions overseas, but the demand for man power entailed by the world war made it necessary to call upon complete Territorial units to volunteer for foreign service. Where the request was made with tact and with regard to the men's domestic obligations, there was a very good response. In some cases, however, the way in which the request was made aroused some amount of resentment among men who had laboured for years with enthusiasm and self-sacrifice to fit themselves for the defence of their countryside. It was only necessary to explain the country's need and allow them a day or two to make arrangements, but the men's domestic ties were not always sufficiently kept in mind and this naturally affected the response. An initial mistake was also made by the War Office in that when the depots were receiving masses of recruits, they were attested as Territorials for home defence only and then asked to volunteer for foreign service. Many did so and were later drafted to the Service Battalions, which were on active service in Norfolk and so could not recruit. Meanwhile, the second line battalions had been formed from these recruits before the first line battalions were up to strength. The former soon developed an *esprit de corps* of their own and hoped eventually to see service with their new unit. This they never did, but the passing of recruits into the second line battalions under these circumstances was mainly the reason why the Essex Territorial Battalions went to Gallipoli under strength.

The 54th East Anglian Division (headquarters, White Hart Hotel) was concentrated in and around Brentwood and to that town on August 9th and 10th the 161st Brigade was sent. The Brigade headquarters were at 11, Avenue Road and those of the respective battalions were: 4th Essex, Drill Hall; 5th, Rose Valley Schools; 6th, The Asylum;¹ 7th, Golden Fleece, Brook Street. The units of the 163rd Brigade were accommodated as follows: Brigade headquarters, Crown Inn, Ingatestone; 4th Norfolks, Fryerning; 5th, Billericay; 4th Suffolks, Hutton; 5th, Ingrave. The 162nd (East Midland) Brigade (5th Beds., 4th Northants, 1st Herts. and 1st Cambs.) was billeted at Romford, with Brigade headquarters at the White Hart Hotel. Headquarters of medical, veterinary and ordnance services and assistant provost marshal were at the Lion and Lamb Hotel, Brentwood; Hertfordshire Yeomanry at "George and Dragon," Mountnessing; Divisional Artillery, 77, High Street, Brentwood; 1st East Anglian Brigade, R.F.A., "Black Horse," Pilgrim's Hatch; 2nd East Anglian Brigade, R.F.A., Schools, Havering; 3rd East Anglian Brigade R.F.A., White Hart Hotel, Hornchurch; 4th East Anglian Brigade, R.F.A., Bower House, Navestock; Divisional R.E., Shenfield; 1st and 2nd Field Companies, R.E., "Eagle and Child," Shenfield; Divisional Signal Company, R.E., Queen's Hotel, New Road, Brentwood; Transport and Supply Column, Romford; Supply Depot, Station Goods Yard, Brentwood; 1st East Anglian Field Ambulance, Hare Street, Romford; 2nd East Anglian Field Ambulance, Junction Hotel, Hutton, and 3rd East Anglian Field Ambulance, Headley Cross, Great Warley.

IN NORFOLK.

The stay at Brentwood was not of long duration, for by August 20th the Division had moved to North-East Norfolk, with headquarters at Norwich; the 4th were at Norwich Workhouse, St. Faith's (this institution was destroyed by fire in 1922);² 5th at Drayton, and 6th and 7th, first at the Cavalry Barracks at Norwich and then at the Earl of Stafford's house, Costessey Hall, which had been vacated just previously by the 2nd Essex. The Battalions actually passed each other on the road. Thereafter, until April, 1915, detachments were at Drayton, Wymondham, Dereham, Swaffham, Melton Constable, Norwich, Acle, Lowestoft, Haddiscoe and St. Olaves. The Division had become part of the Central Army, which was the mobile force for the defence of England in case of invasion. The special duty of the East Anglian Division was to safeguard the Norfolk and Suffolk coast, headquarters being at Bury St. Edmunds.

Whilst at Norwich in August a Service Battalion of four double companies was formed from personnel who had volunteered for

1. The 6th Essex were first quartered at the Maltings, but the accommodation was so indifferent that the next day they moved into the Asylum.
2. The 4th Essex were billeted at Norwich on the nights of the 17th and 18th August in St. Andrew's Hall, where the regulars, whom they succeeded, were the first troops to occupy the building for over 100 years.

foreign service, officered as follows : Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel Welch, T.D. ; second-in-command, Major T. Gibbons ; two companies, 5th Essex, Captains J. M. Heron and W. E. Wilson ; one company, 4th Essex, Captain B. C. Wells ; one company, 6th and 7th Essex, Captain Alexander ; adjutant, Captain A. D. N. Merriman, D.S.O. During November this Battalion received 24 hours' notice to proceed overseas to France and arrangements were hurriedly completed, only for countermanding orders to be received a few hours before the time for entraining at Norwich Station. A few days later the Battalion was disbanded and the men returned to their original units.

In January, 1915, Battalions were reorganized on the four company system. Early in April, 1915, the Division moved to Colchester. The 5th Essex were stationed at West Bergholt and the 4th and 7th Essex at Severalls Asylum. The 6th, too, were at Severalls, with detachments at Mistley and Manningtree. The march from Norwich to Colchester was carried out in three days and the men stood the test splendidly. In the 7th Battalion, for instance, only two men fell out during that march. About the middle of May the Division was transferred to Hertfordshire, with headquarters at St. Albans, from which station it proceeded to Gallipoli.

From September, 1914, to the departure of the Brigade overseas the time was spent mainly in training in expectation of foreign service. This became progressively more exacting. For example, the length of route marches gradually increased until they became real tests of endurance. They were made additionally trying for the men by the fact that the old bandolier equipment containing ammunition and rolled overcoat was carried until July, 1915. This was much less comfortable than the pack outfit. The Brigade also carried the out-of-date Mark VI long rifle, with short bayonet, and the men went to Gallipoli armed with them. Many then took an early opportunity of changing them for the new short service rifle by the simple expedient of picking up the rifles of casualties of other units. Although the Brigade was earmarked to take a part in the defence of East Anglia in an emergency, it did not find the routine of training very much upset by alarms. The 4th Essex, in September, 1914, received orders to leave St. Faith's at once. The Battalion marched thence to Norwich Thorpe Station and men and transport entrained. Immediately afterwards the order was cancelled and the men returned to their former billets. Other units, including the 7th Essex, had a similar experience. At Wymondham in November, 1914, there were two "alarms" in one night. At about 9 p.m. bugle calls were heard all over the town. Men rushed from shops, inns and the institutes organized by various religious bodies to their billets. They paraded in the market square in an extremely short time—only to be dismissed. But during the night, when all were sleeping, the bugles sounded again. This time the men marched to a field

adjoining the railway station, which was illuminated by powerful flares. A special train was there with steam up. Some entrained while the rest waited in the cold. The move was cancelled eventually, and the men returned to bed. For a short spell, while the Brigade was at Norwich in early 1915, it was engaged in digging trenches a few miles outside the city, and these were to form one of the lines of defence in case of an enemy invasion. After this was done, in the early hours of one morning the Brigade marched to their section of the line and manned the trenches so that the units should know the dispositions in case of an emergency. It rained heavily throughout the time and was very cold. Nothing like this happened while the Brigade was at Colchester, but road guards had to be provided for the detection of persons either suspected of espionage or of assistance to enemy aircraft. Armed parties were stationed at dusk on various main roads. Each placed a scaffold pole on trestles across the thoroughfare and hung up warning hurricane lamps. The orders were to stop all motorists and take their names and car numbers. At this period, however, few were about to be stopped. One sentry was cheered at seeing a "customer" approaching, but he found that the blazing headlights were those of a car containing the Adjutant of his Battalion.

Stories concerning this period are prolific, particularly about spies. Many of the reports received proved to be baseless, of course, but one or two had foundation of fact. At one place a German food factory attracted attention because of the proprietor's invitations to soldiers. When his place was searched later the curious circumstance was revealed that there was no letter of more recent date than three years before the outbreak of war. On another occasion a call was paid by a man upon the officers and an offer made of a present of game. He showed surprising knowledge of every Battalion in the Brigade, and, as a result, his house was searched. Again no letter was found later than three years before hostilities commenced. Yet another story concerned strange lights seen flashing on a sky line. This occurrence puzzled the authorities and it was some time before the simple explanation was found that by reason of the road passing over a hill, the lights of cars were seen for a moment upon the crest until they passed down the reverse slope. It was a very busy period, too, owing to the multiplication of units. The second line Essex Territorial battalions were formed at this time, whilst most of the permanent staffs were taken away or posted to Special Service Battalions, presumably because it was thought the Territorial units had acquired sufficient experience to meet their own requirements. The reserve formation took the place of the 54th Division when it was moved inland.

The 161st was a cheerful Brigade when at St. Albans. There were no "alarms." The weather in May, June and July was delightful, the men were fit, most of the less strong having been weeded out, and it was known that overseas service was in sight.

Some of the places in which field days were held, such as Hatfield and Ashridge Parks, were very beautiful. So there was reason for the general good temper. A route march of the whole 54th Division was regarded as a great spectacle by the inhabitants of the St. Albans—Watford area. Spectators assembled in large numbers along the various roads. Just before the date for embarkation one special test of endurance was undergone. The Brigade marched from St. Albans to Ashridge Park, arriving there in the late afternoon. An outpost line was taken up throughout the night and after dawn the Brigade returned to billets. This lengthy exercise, involving two route marches and the missing of a good deal of sleep, led to the further weeding out of those who did not appear fitted for foreign service. During this exercise just on forty miles were covered between twelve noon one day and 1 p.m. the next in full marching order. Much of the work was done in the warm summer sunshine and was a remarkably good test of physical fitness. All ranks were immensely pleased to receive their pith helmets and these were proudly worn in the streets of St. Albans during the few days before proceeding to Devonport. Those officers and men who had seen foreign service, either in France or the Boer War, gave much good advice to the inexperienced and it is doubtful if counsel was ever listened to so attentively. And so the days sped on with all ranks working with a will.

To a member of the 161st Brigade the church parades stood out as one of the most prominent features of this time, particularly when contrasted later with war experiences. The first was in the "White Coons" Pavilion, Felixstowe, on the Sunday after the outbreak of war. "There was the memorial service to Lord Roberts in a handsome village church, where a battalion of Essex Terriers were visibly affected by the organ rendering of the 'Dead March' and the buglers sounding the 'Last Post.' There were several cathedral services—one at Norwich, where the khaki-clad congregation was so large that most of those present could not follow the service. There were several at St. Albans, made more impressive by the knowledge that we were very soon to leave England for the East. Those on ship were, of course, unique. On one voyage we carried on despite the absence of a chaplain, the senior officer officiating. Christmas, 1914, the 4th Essex attended parade in Wymondham Parish Church, Norfolk. Christmas, 1915, saw me in Alexandria, confined to bed with enteric. Braving the dangers of infection, the Padre administered the Sacrament to five of us (including a sick Irish canon, who was later mentioned in despatches for bravery). Only two were able to leave their beds. The books used during the service were presented to us as keepsakes. In 1916 I was at Kabrit, upon the Port Suez section of the Canal. There the Padre arrived by boat at midday on Sunday, having held several services elsewhere. The boat went off, leaving him with us for 24 hours, so, later, when it got cool, the church parade

and Communion celebrations were held. That Sunday's service took place under exceptional conditions. At short notice it was decided to hold it in the officers' mess hut, which was only 18ft. by 18ft. So here the party assembled with a hogshead of beer in one corner and the wine ice safe in the other, and held the celebration with all the added solemnity attached to the celebration of religious rites in war time."

The Division, it was understood, might have gone to India in 1914, but it was decided that it should be retained in England in readiness for active service. Sometime, however, elapsed before definite orders were received. This uncertainty induced a feeling of restlessness, which, perhaps, was responsible for the invention of the following story, told of Lord Kitchener at this time. The war had been over many months and the Field Marshal was discussing it with a friend. "Were you satisfied with the New Army?" he was asked. "Absolutely." "And the Territorials?" "They were splendid." "What about the Essex Infantry Brigade?" "Heavens!" said Kitchener. "I'd forgotten them; they're still training in East Anglia!"

The men of the Brigade were popular everywhere. "I only heard one criticism," wrote an officer, "and that on a route march in Norwich. The platoon to which I was attached was passing a road sweeper, when the latter said, 'Here's the blooming Essex; all pride and no money.' The men laughed good humouredly. 'One of you blokes must 've drunk his beer,' said someone." The remark of the road sweeper may have had its origin in the song with which the Brigade used to wake up the Norfolk towns and villages both by day and night when route marching:—

For we are the Essex boys
And we kick up a hell of a noise;
We know our manners,
We spend our tanners;
We are respected wherever we go.
And when we get to Norwich (or wherever it was)
All the windows they open wide,
All the girls begin to cry,
"Hi tiddly hi ti hi!
"Here are the Essex boys!"

The Essex Brigade were certainly well-known in Norfolk and many letters which the officers subsequently had to censor were directed to daughters of families in Norwich and other places. When, after two months' stay in Wymondham, the 4th Essex moved to Norwich, innumerable applications were received for leave to visit friends.

The entraining of the Brigade for Gallipoli took place at St. Albans at night in order, so it was said, that troop movements should be kept secret. This notwithstanding, a large number of local residents turned out to wish them good luck. Many of the officers and men were surprised to find that the journey from St. Albans to Plymouth was accomplished without changing at or passing through a London terminus. They had not suspected that the railways were linked up so systematically.

TRENCHES ON HILL 60



Imperial War Museum Photograph.

was justified not only in noting its martial exploits in the Near East, but also in remembering the timely aid which three of its battalions rendered to the hard pressed army in France in the critical months

1. "The Dardanelles Campaign," p. 285. (H. W. Nevinston).

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ACTIVE SERVICE.

SUVLA BAY.

The employment of the 54th Division in the Suvla area of operations was not according to original intention. It formed, with the 53rd Division—both on the high seas steaming towards Mudros—the general reserve of General Sir Ian Hamilton's force, which was engaged in three efforts in Gallipoli—from Helles, from Anzac and from Suvla Bay—for the reduction of the Peninsula. The Commander-in-Chief first desired to push the two divisions into the fray in the Anzac area, where the attack upon Sari Bair, made with the object of cutting the Turkish communication with Krithia, had been nearly successful and where it was thought their employment would achieve a decisive issue. The difficulty of water supply is said to have determined Sir Ian not to use them in that theatre, and the need of imparting fresh impulse to the forward movement at Suvla Bay finally turned the transports towards the Gulf of Xeros. "There they arrived after the decisive days were passed, and fell under the curse of an inert spirit, very different from the spirit of the Sari Bair assault. If their presence at Anzac would, indeed, have turned the scale, it is part of the Dardanelles tragedy that the Commander-in-Chief, unable to foresee the Suvla conditions, or still hoping too much from the new landing there, did not venture upon the risk, however dangerous."¹

The East Anglian Division, as before noted, was not only short in personnel and essential services, but its composition had been changed since the mobilization in August, 1914. Three of its best battalions were early sent to France, viz., 1st Hertfordshires, 1st Cambridgeshires and 4th Suffolks. The 1st Hertfordshires were despatched in time to take part in the first Battle of Ypres. A company of the 4th Suffolks was specially mentioned for the assistance given to the 1st Manchesters in the capture of Givenchy in December, 1914. Then in the second Battle of Ypres (April-May, 1915) good patrol work by the 1st Cambridgeshires was also particularly praised by General Sir Herbert Plumer. These three battalions, the Hertfordshires and Cambridgeshires, 39th Division, and the 4th Suffolks, 33rd Division, were also specially mentioned in the later stages of the war, whilst the Suffolks had the honour of being selected as one of the battalions to form the Army of Occupation of the Rhine. Therefore, in recalling the work of the 54th Division, East Anglians are justified not only in noting its martial exploits in the Near East, but also in remembering the timely aid which three of its battalions rendered to the hard pressed army in France in the critical months

1. "The Dardanelles Campaign," p. 285. (H. W. Nevinson).

of 1914 and 1915. The places of the three battalions in the Division were taken by the 1/10th and 1/11th Battalions of the County of London Regiment, from the 56th Division, formerly the 1st London Division, and the 1/8th Hampshires from the Wessex. After the landing at Suvla Bay of the 162nd and 163rd Brigades—the 161st had not then disembarked—General Sir Ian Hamilton notes in his “Gallipoli Diary,” on August 10th, that Stopford had criticized the attacking spirit of these troops, but the Commander-in-Chief remarks, “This letter has driven me very nearly to my wits’ end. Things can’t be so bad! None of us have any complaint at all of the New Army troops, only of their Old Army Generals.” Again, on 12th August, he recurs to the matter: “These stories about the troops? I do not accept them. The troops have lost heavily, but they are right if there were leaders. I know quite well both Territorial Divisions (53rd and 54th). I knew them in England, that is to say. Since then they have had their eyes picked out. They have been through the strainer and the best officers and men and the best battalions have been serving for months past in France. The three show battalions in the 54th are in France and their places have been taken by the 10th and 11th London and by the 8th Hants. Essex is good, London is good and Hants. is good, but the trinity is not territorial. The same with the Welshmen. Yet even so, taking the Territorials as they are; a scratch lot; half strength; no artillery; not a patch upon the original Divisions as I inspected them in England six months ago; even so, they’d fight right enough and keen enough if they were set fair and square at their fence.” That faith in these Territorial Divisions which would not be subdued is reflected in the last note made in the diary, under date September, 1915, when at Anzac, whither the 54th had been transferred. General Hamilton wrote that he “lunched with General Inglesfield; then plodded through the trenches held by his Division (nice looking boys) and by the Indian Brigade.” The General’s belief in the troops was amply vindicated later at Gaza. The 54th Division had the distinction, though under orders for France, of being retained for the closing stages of the campaign in Palestine at the special request of Lord Allenby, the only all-white division that fought throughout from Egypt to Syria. Writing in after years upon Sir Ian Hamilton’s comments, an Essex officer observed, “The troops were absolutely fit on leaving England, but looking upon the training in the light of after experience, I think it may have failed somewhat in teaching officers to use their own initiative sufficiently. We were too inclined to expect clear and full orders, and these we naturally could not get in the early days of Gallipoli. They were essential, however, with enthusiastic but inexperienced troops. Secrecy had been made such a fetish that maps were not to be had until days after we landed.” In one unit, however, precaution was taken to apply to Army headquarters direct for maps, with

the result that a supply was soon to hand.

The divisional general was Major-General F. S. Inglefield, who had served with credit in South Africa and had been in command of the 54th for two years. The three brigades were numbered 161st (Essex), 162nd and 163rd, commanded respectively by Brig.-General F. F. W. Daniell, Brig.-General C. de Winton and Brig.-General C. M. Brunker. The 162nd Brigade was composed of the 5th Bedfords, 4th Northants and 10th and 11th Londons, and the 163rd Brigade of the 4th and 5th Norfolks, 5th Suffolks and 8th Hampshires. The embarkation strength of the Essex Brigade¹ was as follows :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
4th Bn. The Essex Regiment	.. 29	807
5th " " " "	.. 31	655
6th " " " "	.. 29	891
7th " " " "	.. 29	845

The Brigade sailed from Devonport—1/4th in the transport "Marquette" (July 21st); 1/5th in the "Grampian," together with the Brigade headquarters (July 23rd); 1/6th in the "Southland" (July 24th), with two companies of the 7th Essex. The other two companies of the 7th followed in the "Braemar Castle" on July 26th. The "Southland" also carried forty Queen Alexandra nurses, who disembarked at Alexandria. The voyage was uneventful. Destroyer escort was supplied until the ships were out of range of hostile submarines. The vessels called at Malta and then went on to Alexandria, where the transport, with personnel, was disembarked, so that everything had to be hand carried when the Battalions landed at Suvla Bay. "Quite early in the morning of August 2nd, the day on which the 1/5th Essex arrived at Alexandria, most of us," wrote Lieut. J. F. Finn, "were on deck appreciating the fine view which Alexandria presents from the outer harbour. A native boat came alongside containing a vendor of the *Egyptian Gazette*, the principal Anglo-Egyptian paper. It published a despatch from Ashmead Bartlett describing the Gallipoli campaign in the very plainest language. All the trials and difficulties were clearly set forth—water shortage, fly pest, sanitation troubles, stench of the dead and the fact that in some trenches corpses could only be just covered with sand, so that occasionally an arm or leg would protrude. But not a person who read this vivid account seemed to manifest the slightest dismay, although it was known we were going there to share the horrors." The stay was short and the Brigade moved on to Lemnos, where the scene in the great natural harbour of Mudros was most heartening to all ranks. The extraordinary display of naval and military force there and the tremendous amount of activity made us feel certain victory

1. The second line transport of each Battalion was left behind at St. Albans with all animals. The first line transport, with personnel, also three officers and ten per cent. of all ranks as nucleus, was disembarked at Alexandria. The embarkation strengths of the Battalions are given according to a return at Records, Warley.

must be ours. This feeling was intensified when a large vessel anchored alongside and her skipper, in a chatty mood, gave an optimistic report of the operations on the Peninsula."

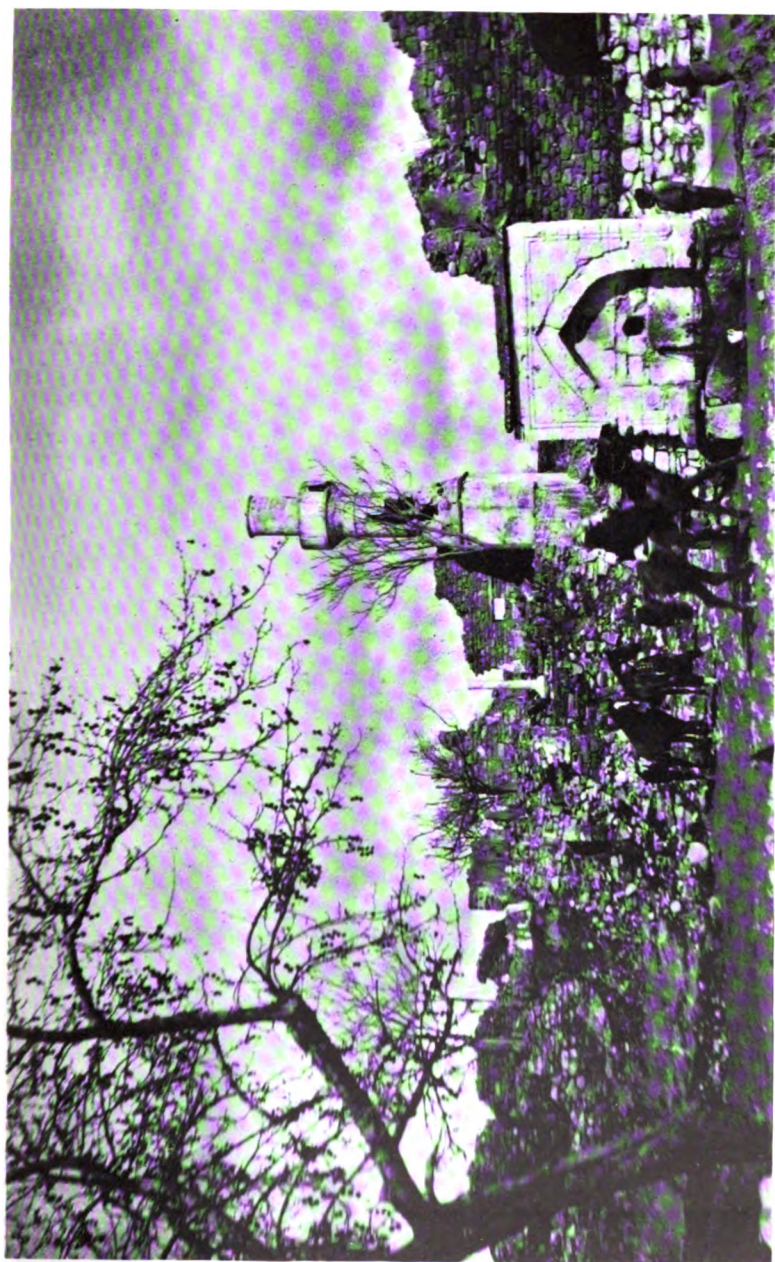
The shipping included the giant "Aquitania" and "Mauretania," and many other large liners and cargo ships. Among the warships of the Allied fleet was a small Russian cruiser, nicknamed the "Packet of Woodbines" because of her five funnels. It was at Mudros that the troops were served out with water in two gallon tins with lids—"We were given to understand that it was precious; in fact, that we should probably have to fight for the refilling of those cans. I doubt if the ghastly possibility of being without water on that inhospitable shore worried any of us. Those who had landed at Helles and Anzac found water somehow and it must be confessed that the water cans were looked upon as a bit of a nuisance."¹

Headquarters of the 161st Brigade and the 1/5th Essex were, on the evening of August 9th, transferred from the "Grampian" to the "Hazel," a small but fast steamship which had formerly been on patrol duty in the Irish Sea. The Division was being despatched to support the landing which had been made at Suvla Bay. It was most trying to hear the dinner gong sound on the "Grampian" and for the troops to know that the meal was not for them. They had to fall to on tinned beef and hard biscuits. In the early morning—"packed like sardines; they could hardly have squeezed another man or even another water can into her"—they anchored at 5 a.m. off Imbros, the noise of heavy firing stretching from Anzac to Kiretech Tepe. When close to Suvla the troops were transferred to flat-bottomed steam lighters and put ashore at the pier at "A" Beach without a casualty at 12.30 p.m. The occasional burst of a shell or the flick of a mauser bullet on the water showed that they were within range, for Sari Bair, Tekke Tepe and Kiretech Tepe Sirt all overlooked the Bay and gave effective enemy observation, though the vegetation afforded some concealment from the last-named. After waiting on shore during the daylight hours, orders came at 10 p.m. for the Division to move 2½ miles in an easterly direction to fill a gap in the line between the right of the 10th Division and left of the 53rd Division (Anafarta Ova). The 1/6th and 1/7th Essex were transferred from the "Southland" to "A" Beach and "A" Beach West in oil-engined lighters at half an hour after midnight (night of August 11th-12th).²

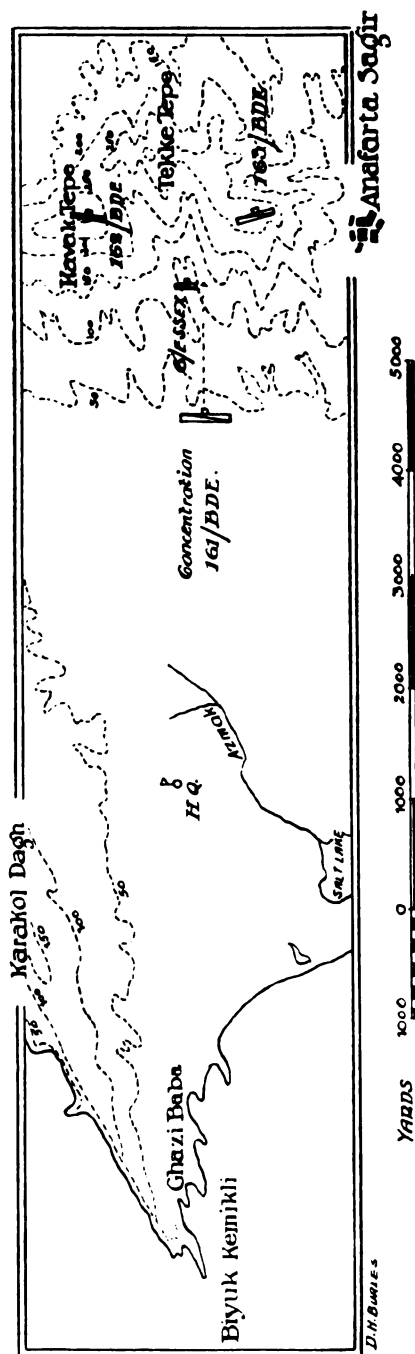
The two Battalions immediately took over reserve trenches from the 163rd Brigade, with 1/7th Essex and one company

1. "With the 15 Essex in the East." (*Lieut. Colonel Gibbons*).

2. The War Diary of the 7th Battalion states that the unit arrived at Suvla Bay at 5.30 a.m. on August 11th and landed at "A" Beach and "A" Beach West. An officer records that the landing of half the Battalion occurred after breakfast and was complete by 1 p.m. The Brigade War Diary, however, simply notes that under date, August 12th, the 1/6th and 1/7th Essex were landed on that day. An officer of the 6th Essex states that the Battalion disembarked in broad daylight about 6.30 a.m. on August 11th. From the evidence available, it may be taken as certain that the landing was on the morning of August 11th.



ANAFARTA VILLAGE, SUVLA BAY.



SCALE OF YARDS

Operation Planned for 54th Division immediately upon landing and not carried out.

[Drawn from information supplied by Major Kenyon Taylor.

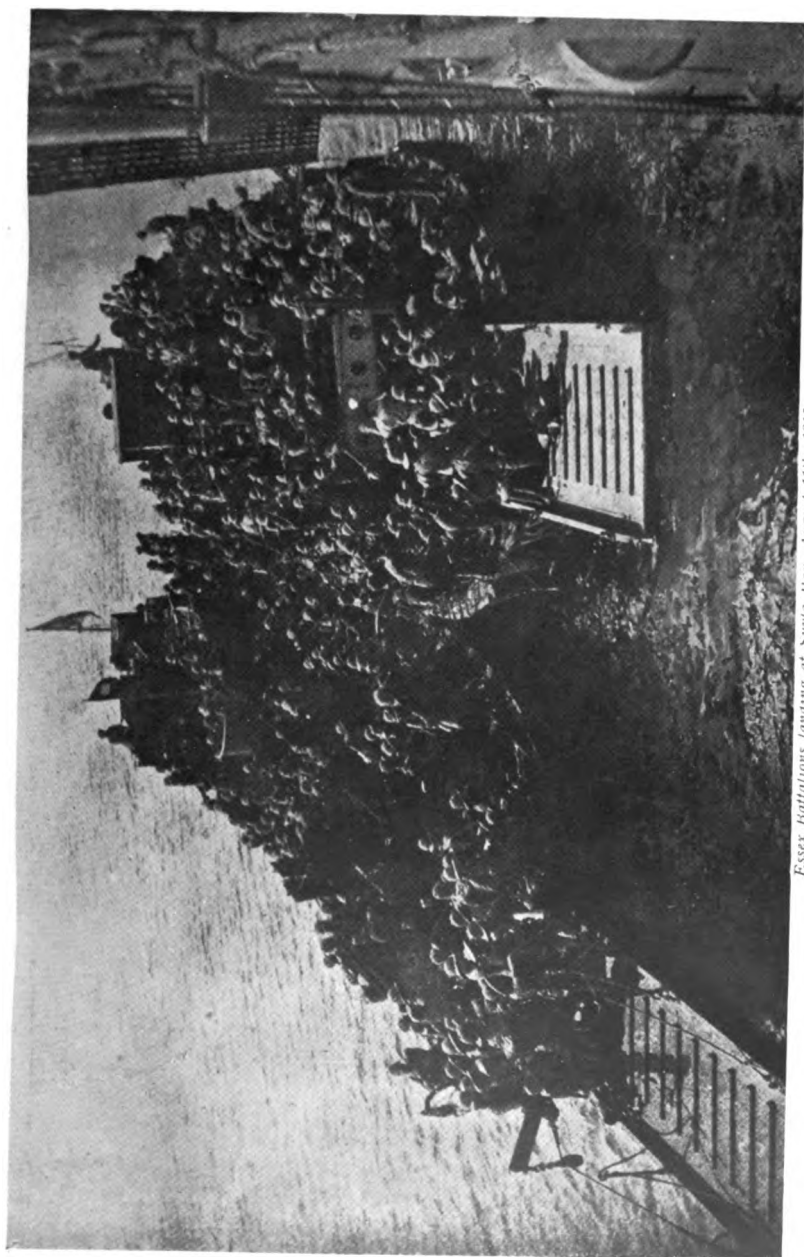
1/6th Essex in the first line and 1/5th Essex and three companies 1/6th Essex in support. On August 12th half the 1/4th Essex landed, followed on the night of August 13th by "A" and "D" Companies, but this Battalion did not rejoin the Brigade until after August 14th.

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS AT SUVLA BAY.

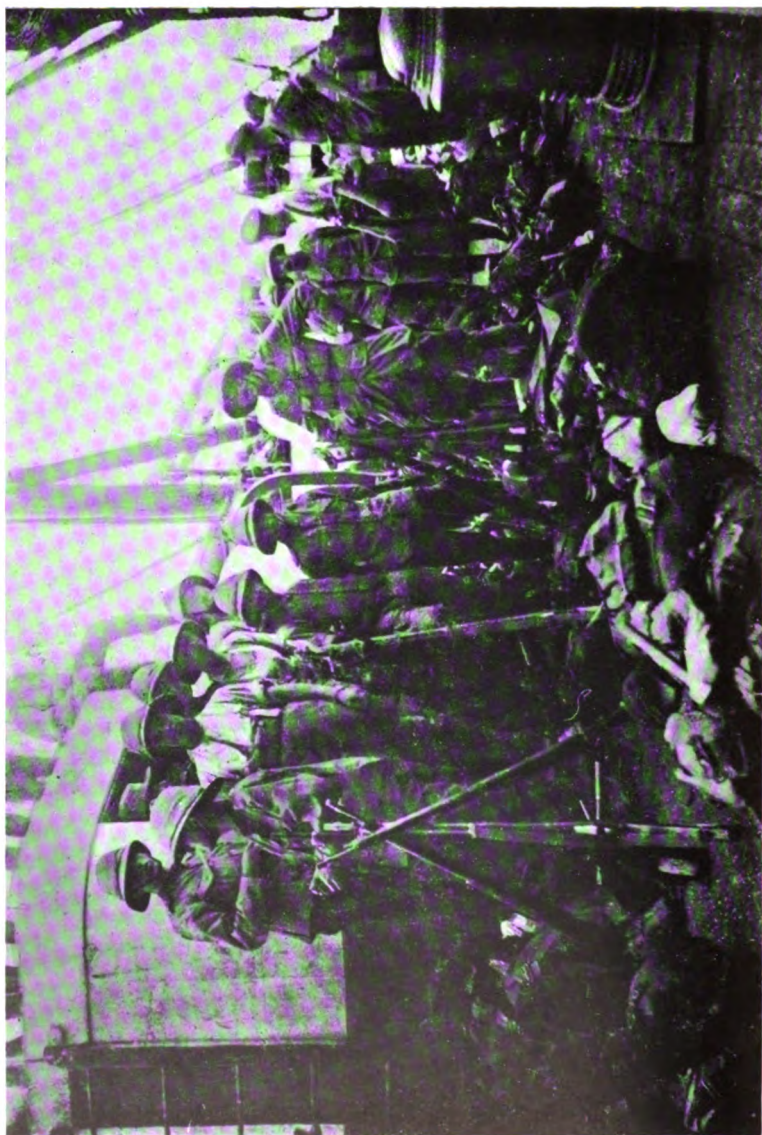
The effort to conquer Gallipoli had been proceeding with varying fortune since a landing was effected on April 26th, 1915. The two principal strokes were directed from Helles against Krithia and Achi Baba and from Anzac to secure the heights of Sari Bair, commanding the Narrows. Fighting had been continuous and severe, and the Turkish resistance, combined with the improvement which was being made in the enemy defensive system, caused the Commander-in-Chief to look elsewhere in order to break the deadlock before the winter months. He decided upon a threefold operation, which had for its objects the cutting of land communication between the bulk of the Turkish Army and Constantinople by a rush from Anzac, the gaining of such a command for artillery as would cut off the bulk of the Turkish Army from sea traffic with Constantinople and Asia, and securing Suvla Bay as a winter base for Anzac and the troops operating in the northern theatre. A series of diversions was planned, but the major intent was to hold the enemy by a containing attack from Helles, to storm Sari Bair from Anzac and to land an army corps at Suvla Bay, all these movements being timed to commence simultaneously. Sir Ian Hamilton, in his despatches, observed that "Anzac was to deliver the knockdown blow; Helles and Suvla were complementary operations." Be that as it may, chief interest in the operation centred at Suvla Bay and it was there that the final phases took place. The attack from Helles was directed against 1,200 yards of the Turkish front on the right and right centre. The 88th Brigade of the 29th Division was deputed to conduct this forlorn hope, with an effort to capture two small Turkish trenches enfilading the advance by the 42nd Division. There was desperate fighting from 3.50 p.m. onwards on August 6th and although the enemy's lines were entered, the Turks counter-attacked in such strength that by nightfall the men were back in their trenches. The 1st Battalion The Essex Regiment were specially mentioned on this occasion for the way in which it entered a crowded enemy trench despite the most determined resistance. Another effort was made next day between Mal Tepe Dere and the west branch of the Kanli Dere, when, despite enemy activity on the following day, a vineyard was seized and incorporated into the British line. During the nights of the 4th, 5th and 6th August the troops in the Anzac area were reinforced until General Birdwood had nearly 40,000 men under his command, which were to be devoted to two enterprises—(1) holding the Anzac position and making frontal

assaults therefrom and (2) seizing Chunuk Bair ridge. If the latter could be held an attack upon Hill 305 (Koja Chemen Tepe) was possible, the success of which would be assured by pressure from the Suvla flank. With that point in our hands we should have commanded the Narrows. Epic fighting ensued from August 6th to August 10th by the Australian and New Zealand Divisions, the 13th Division, 29th Brigade of the 10th Division and Indian troops. Lone Pine was seized and held. Chunuk Bair was taken and then retaken, though only the farm and the western slopes were finally retained. "The grand coup had not come off. The Narrows were still out of sight and beyond field gun range." By this date, too, it was realized that the enterprise at Suvla Bay had also failed to achieve its full strategical result, although a landing had been safely effected. This notwithstanding, fighting went on throughout August. The possession of Suvla, originally held by about 4,000 Turkish troops, would have assured a submarine proof base and a harbour safe against gales, excepting those from the south-west, in addition to which the seizure and retention of commanding heights, particularly Anafarta Sagir and Hill 100 (Ismail Oglu Tepe), would have weakened the enemy hold upon the vital ridge of Sari Bair and thus afforded strong support to the Anzac attack. It was, however, broken, intricate country and lacked water, and the partial breakdown of the careful preparations in the latter respect had a decisive influence.

For the effort in the Suvla area Lieut.-General the Hon. Sir F. Stopford had the 9th Army Corps at his disposal, less the 13th Division and the 29th Brigade, 10th Division. The immediate task of the Corps was to seize the Chocolate and Ismail Oglu hills, together with the high ground on the north and east of Suvla Bay. The landing was entrusted to the 11th Division. On the eve of August 6th the 32nd and 33rd Brigades went ashore at "B" and "C" Beaches and the 34th Brigade at "A" Beach. The enemy was surprised and Lala Baba was quickly seized. On the following day the two brigades of the 10th Division fought their way forward on the left. The weather was hot and the want of water was severely felt. These causes and the obstinate opposition of the enemy prevented a decisive advance. Troops managed to get as far as the hill north of Anafarta Sagir, but could not retain their hold. The 53rd Division had been disembarked by the early morning of August 9th. The 54th Division was also arriving by August 11th and the 162nd and 163rd Brigades were in the serious fighting on August 13th, when a far-reaching plan was to be carried out, which assigned to the 162nd Brigade a night march and the storming of Kavak Tepe and to the 163rd Brigade the capture of Tekke Tepe, in the centre of the line, to the left of Anafarta Sagir. The 161st Brigade was to push on past Kuchuk Anafarta Ova and come into support about Kargha Deirmen Dere, in front of Tekke Tepe. Upon gaining the hills mentioned, the troops



Essex Battalions landing at Santa Bay, August 11th, 1915.



Preparing for Disembarkation at Suila Bay: Essex men on the Transport "Southland."

were, if able to entrench, to form a series of redoubts. The 163rd Brigade, as a preliminary, were ordered to make good Kuchuk Anafarta Ova. It was then that the 1/5th Norfolks suffered disastrously in an episode which has become historic. "Against the yielding forces of the enemy, Colonel Sir H. Beauchamp, a bold, self-confident officer, eagerly pressed forward, followed by the best part of the Battalion. The fighting grew hotter and the ground more wooded and broken. At this stage many men were wounded or grew exhausted with thirst and these found their way back to camp during the night. But the Colonel, with 16 officers and 250 men, still kept pushing on, driving the enemy before him. Amongst these ardent souls was part of a fine company enlisted from the King's Sandringham estates. Nothing more was ever seen or heard of any of them. They charged into the forest and were lost to sight or sound. Not one of them ever came back." The night march and projected attack were abandoned upon the representation of the corps commander that he lacked supplies. At the time the 161st Brigade were concentrating on the shore the British line at Suvla Bay ran from near Azmak Dere through the knoll east of Chocolate Hill to the ground held by the 10th Division about Kiretch Tepe Sirt. The invaders were fighting against time in broken country, with tired troops. Fronting them was an enemy heavily reinforced daily and numbering about this time 20,000 men. The issue had been decided ere the 161st Brigade was called upon to play its maiden part in active warfare.

General Stopford was ordered to strengthen the left of his line and on August 15th two brigades of the 10th Division endeavoured to obtain command of the crest of the Kiretch Tepe Sirt, with the 162nd Brigade of the 54th Division in support on the right. Some hours of indecisive fighting and heavy losses followed. That night General Stopford handed over command of the 9th Corps to General de Lisle, who then had at his disposal the 10th Division (less one brigade), 11th, 53rd and 54th Divisions, but, owing to casualties, with a strength of less than 30,000 rifles, opposed to an enemy then estimated by Sir Ian Hamilton not to number more than 35,000. In the whole of Gallipoli the respective rifle strengths at this time were placed at 95,000 for the British Army and 110,000 for the Turkish. The 29th Division were transferred from Helles to Suvla and the 2nd Mounted Division landed from Egypt. With these reinforcements an attack was planned upon Ismail Oglu Tepe in an endeavour to secure Suvla Bay and Anzac Cove from shellfire. Until Ismail was occupied an advance upon the Anafartas was impossible. The 53rd and 54th Divisions were to hold the enemy from Sulajik to Kiretch Tepe Sirt, while the 29th Division and 11th Division stormed Ismail Oglu Tepe. Two brigades of the 10th Division and the 2nd Mounted Division were in corps reserve. General Birdwood was to co-operate from Anzac by swinging forward his left flank to Susuk Kuyu and Kaiajik

Aghala. The 87th Brigade of the 29th Division carried the trenches on Scimitar Hill (Hill 70), but the 86th Brigade were attacked by a forest fire, for the hill was covered with dense holly oak scrub, which had been ignited by the fierce artillery bombardments. The 11th Division rushed the Turkish trenches between Hetman Chair and Aire Kavak, but the subsequent advance was not successful, though conducted with great bravery and tenacity. The 2nd South Midland Brigade was then put in to restore the fortunes of the day, but could not get farther than the front line infantry. The losses were heavy, the brunt being borne by the 29th Division. On this day there fell Brig.-General Lord Longford and Brig.-General P. A. Kenna, V.C. The supporting effort from Anzac resulted in the seizure of a portion of the Turkish trenches and establishment of a new line in the neighbourhood of Kaiajik Aghala. "And now we had to suspend progress for a bit. Work was put in hand upon the line from Suvla to Anzac, a minor offensive routine of sniping and bombing was organized and, in a word, trench warfare set in on both sides." On August 24th Lieut.-General the Hon. J. H. G. Byng took over command at Suvla Bay and the last piece of aggressive fighting in the campaign occurred before August closed, when Major-General Cox from Anzac seized Hill 60, which afforded an outlook over the Anafarta Sagir Valley and safer lateral communication between Anzac and Suvla Bay. "My narrative of battle incidents must end here," wrote Sir Ian Hamilton. "From this date onwards up to the date of my departure on October 17th the flow of munitions and drafts fell away. Sickness, the legacy of a desperately trying summer, took heavy toll of the survivors of so many arduous conflicts. No longer was there any question of operations on the grand scale, but with such troops it was difficult to be downhearted. All ranks were cheerful; all remained confident that, so long as they stuck to their guns, their country would stick to them and see them victoriously through the last and greatest of the Crusades." Sir Ian Hamilton was recalled because he did not agree with the policy of evacuation. He was replaced by General Sir G. C. Monro and thereafter until the evacuation of Suvla in November and the complete withdrawal from the Peninsula in January, preparations went quietly forward behind the line for that delicate, but brilliantly successful, operation, and all thought of offensive movement in that sphere of operations was abandoned.

When commenting upon the gallant behaviour of the 4th Division (which included the 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment) at Le Cateau (August 26th, 1914), General Sir H. Smith Dorrien stated that it was without its eyes and ears, for it had no divisional cavalry, engineers, artillery or ambulance service and its deeds upon that memorable day were, therefore, the more meritorious. It should be remembered that when the 54th (East Anglian) Division went into action at Suvla Bay, just a year later, it was even worse provided, for the transport personnel had been also left

in England and the battalions were under war strength.¹ Moreover, when it landed at Suvla Bay it was hurried into the fighting line without acclimatization after three weeks on shipboard and, consequently, all ranks were the less fitted to sustain the severe physical fatigue and privation from lack of water which were to be their portion. All these circumstances must be borne in mind when assessing the value of their military contribution to the tragic Gallipoli enterprise, "that great human effort," as John Masefield has termed it, "which came, more than once, very near to triumph, achieved the impossible many times and failed, in the end, as many great deeds of arms have failed, from something which had nothing to do with arms nor with the men who bore them. That the effort failed is not against it; much that is most splendid in military history failed, many great things and noble men have failed." The strain placed upon officers and men of the 54th Division is vividly portrayed in a letter which the D.A.D.M.S., Lieut.-Colonel F. E. Fremantle, contributed to *The Lancet* in 1916: "In the Suvla Bay fighting during the week after landing, the regimental medical officer, like the combatants, had to do what he could and how he could. Like them, he was advancing in darkness under fire, through unknown, roadless, broken country, rock and scrub (thick bushes), hillocks and gullies, affording little cover and no opportunity of taking any long or broad views of his battalion or of his work. For some time he could not establish any one regimental aid-post; he crawled about, bandaging wounds, with his stretcher-bearers and himself helping to bring in the wounded, sometimes by day, mostly by night. The strain was intense and four strong, healthy, mature regimental medical officers out of the 12 in the division succumbed to it in the first few days. One had dysenteric diarrhoea as his main symptom; one was suffering from exhaustion, capped by a shell explosion within a few feet; the third, a jolly young giant from a prosperous suburban practice, finally succumbed to the shock of being called to attend four of his best 'pals,' laid out by a single shell. The fourth had lost his brother in the action, a combatant officer in the same regiment, and was brought down on a stretcher as if moribund; with the utmost pluck he pulled himself together in 24 hours and set out again for the trenches, but fainted on the way up and was packed off on a hospital ship. If such was the result of strain on the medical officers, it may be imagined what its effects were on the troops."

LANDING OF THE DIVISION.

The story of the 54th Division for those fateful days of August is soon outlined. The Division commenced disembarkation on the evening of August 10th. The remaining units of the Division, with headquarters, landed early on the morning of August 12th. Part of the 1/4th Essex, needed to complete the 161st Brigade, did not join

1. The divisional artillery was retained in England until it was sent to France in November, 1915, and it did not rejoin the Division until February, 1916, at Mena Camp, Cairo.

until August 16th.¹ On the evening of August 11th the 163rd Brigade, with a battalion of the 162nd Brigade and the 5th Essex, of the 161st Brigade, were moved forward in the centre to fill a gap between the 53rd and 10th Divisions, and next morning the three battalions of 161st Brigade (1/5th, 1/6th and 1/7th Essex) occupied the reserve line. It must not be thought, however, that this line comprised trenches like unto those in France. There was no such indication of its existence and even the first line only consisted of a dry ditch, out of which some of the earth had been scooped. The G.O.C. made preparations for a night march on August 12th in order to attack at dawn the next morning the heights of Kavak Tepe and Teke Tepe. General Stopford, to facilitate that movement, ordered the 163rd Brigade to secure Kuchuk Anafarta Ova, the enclosed ground about which was held by the enemy. Thus it was that on the afternoon of August 12th, the 163rd Brigade, under cover of the guns of H.M.S. "Talbot," attacked and established themselves, in spite of strong opposition, near to Anafarta Ova. The 1/5th Norfolks were on the right, with 1/8th Hampshires in the centre and 1/5th Suffolks on the left. It was in this advance that part of 1/5th Norfolks went on and were never seen again. The Brigade maintained itself upon the line it had won, but the night march was abandoned because of the difficulties of supply, which would have been hard to overcome even if the heights had been seized. The 163rd Brigade was relieved by the 161st Brigade at 5.55 p.m. on August 14th, which then had the 53rd Division on the right and 10th Division on the left, but touch with the latter was not obtained until some hours later. The advance of the 161st Brigade in daylight earned the admiration of Australian troops watching it from Anzac. The 5th Essex were in the centre, with the 6th and 7th on the flanks. It was the baptism of fire for the Brigade and though they were met with a furious fusillade as they advanced steadily over the plain, there was no hesitation. The Battalions reached the line and then worked all night consolidating the position. On August 15th, after hot fighting, the 10th Division seized Kireteh Tepe ridge, but had to relinquish its hold upon the topmost point. In this gallant enterprise the 162nd Brigade operated on the right and in face of strenuous opposition obtained touch with the left of the 161st Brigade, which had been ordered to extend to the left to join with the right of the 10th Division. The 162nd Brigade and the 10th Division lost contact and the gap remained unfilled during the night. The line was made intact the next day, when the 161st and 163rd Brigades consolidated. They strengthened the position and touch was regained with the 53rd Division on the right. In the afternoon of that day the 53rd Division was ordered to relieve the 54th Division of that part of the line held by the 161st Brigade. The 163rd Brigade was sent at 8 p.m. on

1. The landing of the unit was complete on the night of August 13th. It had been posted in reserve.

the 16th to reinforce the 10th Division on Kireteh Tepe and during that night the 161st Brigade, now complete by the arrival of the remainder of the 1/4th Essex, followed the 163rd Brigade. Major-General F. S. Inglefield had been placed in command of the sector from the right of the 162nd Brigade to the sea, having the 10th as well as the 54th Division under his orders. He determined to relieve the 10th Division and on the night of August 17th-18th the 54th Division took over the line on Kireteh Tepe. Throughout this movement the troops were subjected to incessant sniping and frequent shellfire, which caused considerable casualties. The 162nd Brigade were on the right, the 161st Brigade in the centre and the 163rd Brigade continued the line to the sea, the 53rd Division being on the right of the 162nd Brigade. Orders were issued to the 54th Division on August 20th that an advance was to be made from the line held by that Division, with a view to making more secure the base of operations, but the orders were countermanded.

A more ambitious attack was in contemplation for August 21st, viz., the seizure of Ismail Oglu Tepe on the right sector. As noted above, the 10th and 29th Divisions were assigned to this objective, the 53rd and 54th Divisions having to hold the enemy from Sulajik, in the centre of the line, to the sea, but in a state of readiness to press forward should the enemy show signs of retreat or disorganization as a result of the attack. These anticipations did not materialize and the Division stayed in the trenches. The chief incident of the next few days was the relief of the 162nd Brigade by the 29th Division on August 22nd, the former moving into divisional reserve on the north-western slopes of Karakol Dag. The 29th Division was withdrawn on August 24th and then the 161st Brigade prolonged its right flank so as to take in part of the vacated line. The 54th Division did not remain much longer in this sector, for on August 25th orders were received that the Division was to go into corps reserve near Lala Baba upon relief by the 11th Division. Whilst waiting for the incoming troops, the second line of defence on Karakol Dag was strengthened. On the night of August 26th-27th the 163rd and 162nd Brigades were relieved, the former proceeding to the 54th Division defence area and the latter to Lala Baba in corps reserve. The next night the 161st Brigade was replaced and marched to the 54th Division defence area. That same night the 162nd Brigade moved to Salt Lake and the 163rd Brigade to Lala Baba and during the night of August 28th-29th the 161st Brigade also proceeded to Lala Baba. Particular care was taken that units should not move along the beach as formed bodies owing to the danger of shellfire. At 9 p.m. on August 28th brigade headquarters and two battalions of the 162nd Brigade set off for Anzac. On August 29th the remaining battalions of the 162nd Brigade and 1st Field Company, R.E., also moved into Anzac, followed the next day by headquarters and two battalions, 161st Brigade, and 3rd Field Ambulance,

then, on August 31st, by the other two battalions of the 161st Brigade and 2nd Field Company, R.E. On September 1st and 2nd the 163rd Brigade marched in with the 1st Field Ambulance, Cyclist Company and S.A.A. Column, the 2nd Field Ambulance proceeding to 162nd Brigade area on September 3rd. The troops relieved were the 38th Brigade, 4th Australian Brigade and New Zealand Mounted Rifles. This sphere of responsibility embraced from a point left of a knoll just across Aghyl Dere, in the centre of the Anzac position, to Susak Kuya on the left. The administrative boundaries embraced the main gully bed, all north of the southern bank of Aghyl Dere leading down to the sea, and on the other flank the road from Susak Kuya through Osmak Kuya to the sea. The 162nd Brigade was on the right, the 161st Brigade then taking charge to the bottom of the Kaiajik gully. The 163rd Brigade continued the line along Kaiajik Aghala until it was taken over by the 29th Indian Brigade, temporarily attached to the 54th Division, to Susak Kuya. It was known as No. 6 Sector and Major-General Inglefield was in command. At the extreme north of the sector the enemy trenches approached within 70 to 80 yards, but the distance thereafter rapidly lengthened up to 200 yards. For the greater part of the front the Turks were 280 to 300 yards away, though a small advanced trench approached within 80 yards at the southern end (Aghyl Dere). For ten days from September 1st parties of from 300 to 350 were interchanged with the New Zealanders and Australians. The 161st Brigade headquarters took over from the 4th Australian Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Monash, afterwards General Sir John Monash.

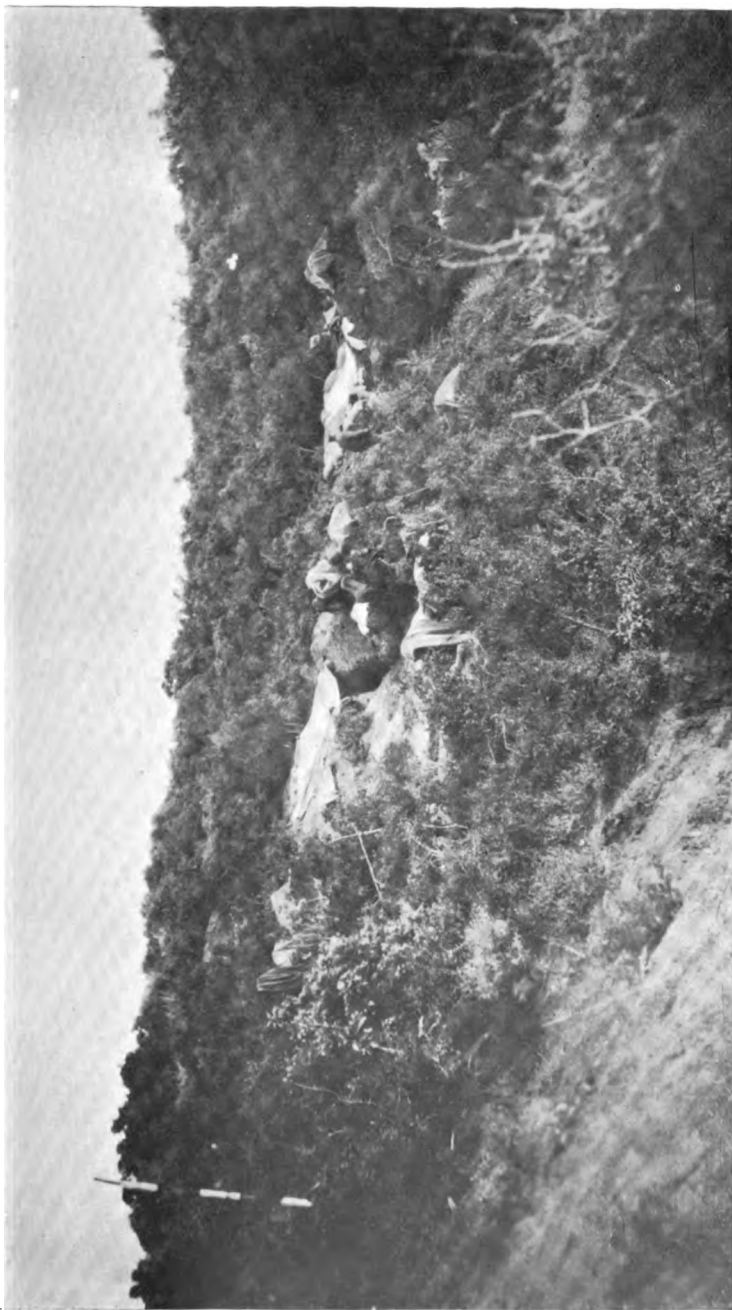
The 1/4th Essex (29 officers and 753 other ranks)¹ left St. Albans early on the morning of July 21st. The officers were: Lieut.-Colonel F. Hawkins, in command, Major C. H. Rimington Taylor, Captains B. C. Wells, M. M. Morgan Owen, J. G. Gowan, H. R. Tyler, P. H. Manbey, C. L. Awbrey, K. de S. Calthrop, W. C. Church, Lieutenants G. M. Emery, C. S. Attwood, J. Macadam, J. M. Marshall, F. C. Donner, C. F. Batsford, 2nd Lieutenants D. D. R. Dale, A. W. New, H. C. Naldrett, E. J. Hickman, W. S. Thomas, J. C. Lockwood, E. Austin Miller, H. B. New, with the Adjutant (Captain Cooper), Quartermaster (Lieut. W. H. Todd), Medical Officer (Captain A. J. Gibson), Machine Gun Officer (Lieut. W. H. Butcher), Signals Officer (2nd Lieut. J. W. Chitty) and Chaplin (Rev. Canon Dolan). Lieut. Copeman was with the divisional staff.² Headquarters and "A" and "B" Companies were in

1. This is the total according to Battalion records.

2. Of the 29 officers who embarked with the 4th Essex, eleven were destined to fall in action or die of disease. Of the two brothers New, Athelstan William and Hedley Bruce, the latter was killed whilst serving with the R.F.C. on October 31st, 1917, and his brother, Captain A. W. New, died of disease on May 15th, 1918. Two other brothers, Lieutenants James Ferrier Macadam and John Macadam, also served with the Battalion. The latter, who went out with the 4th Essex to Gallipoli, died of wounds on August 18th, 1915, whilst his brother died of disease on November 10th, 1918, seven days after the Armistice.

the train departing at 1.55 a.m. and "C" and "D" in the second, which steamed out at 3 a.m. The Battalion embarked upon the Admiralty transport, s.s. "Marquette," which left Devonport at 6 p.m. for her last voyage, for she was torpedoed upon her return. The ship anchored for a time in the shelter of the breakwater at Plymouth before sailing. Destroyer escort was provided until the Channel was cleared off Ushant the following morning. The weather for the first day or two was rough and many officers and men were ill. This notwithstanding, the Battalion soon settled down. A guard of three officers and 50 men was always on duty on the boat deck. On July 25th the course was changed and the ship steered for the Straits of Gibraltar. Ceuta was passed at 11.8 p.m., when the transport was hailed by a destroyer, desiring to know her name, destination and the number of troops aboard. The weather was bright and calm in the Mediterranean. Bizerta was observed at 9 a.m. on July 28th and at 7 a.m. on the following day the naval harbour at Valetta, Malta, was entered. The stay was brief, for orders were received to steam to Alexandria. Reports were to hand of enemy submarines in the neighbourhood and full speed was the order when outside the harbour. The transport passed between Crete and Tripoli on the evening of July 30th, and at 7 a.m. on August 1st Alexandria was reached. At that port a wireless message was received which should have been communicated at Malta, but arrived too late. It was to the effect that the Battalion was to go direct to Mudros, in the Isle of Lemnos, and ten minutes after noon the "Marquette" was on her way to the army base. The harbour was reached early in the morning of August 3rd, where instructions were received for the Battalion to remain on board until further orders. The next day it was ascertained that the troops were to await the arrival of the rest of the 54th Division and that, meanwhile, the stores were to be landed. The "Aquitania," with the headquarters of the 54th Division, arrived on August 6th. The Battalion disembarked on August 8th, leaving 850 officers and men for fatigue work on board the "Minnetonka." Another party of fifty also assisted in landing wounded at West Mudros. Private W. Pearce, the first to succumb on active service, died of heart failure following dysentery, and was taken to Australian Pier for burial on August 9th. "B" and "C" Companies, with headquarters, left Mudros at 2.15 p.m. on August 12th, in the paddle steamer s.s. "Barry," for Suvla Bay. They landed at "C" Beach about 10.30 p.m., and marched across the Neck at 3.30 the next morning to a cramped position, where shelters were dug in the sand. In the evening the companies were moved to an artillery observation post in the neighbourhood of Lala Baba, where a fatigue party, 200 strong (Captain P. H. Manbey), worked under the direction of C.R.E. from 8 p.m. to midnight. There was constant shellfire during the day. Operations were being directed against Anafarta Saghir and Turkish artillery was shelling the warships. "A" and

"D" Companies, under Major Taylor, which had left Mudros at 2.15 p.m., on August 18th, on the s.s. "Queen Victoria," arrived at Suvla Bay at 7 p.m., but did not land, owing to shelling, until 10.30 p.m. The two companies went into the reserve trenches at 7.30 p.m. on August 14th and next day took up a position on Norfolk Hill in support of a general attack. At 4 p.m. headquarters and "B" and "C" Companies came in and the Battalion was once more complete. Four men were wounded. The 4th Essex were joined by the 4th Northants on August 16th, but, with the exception of one company, the latter were soon withdrawn. The casualties from shell-fire and sniping were heavy. Captain John Grave Cowan and Lieut. Ernest John Hickman were killed, Lieut. John Macadam died two days later from wounds, Lieut. Dale was wounded, three other ranks were killed and 14 wounded. Captain Gowan, who had been in civil life treasurer and accountant to Ilford Urban District Council, was a very keen pre-war Territorial officer and commanded the Ilford Company. He was an excellent rifle shot and the Battalion's musketry officer. On August 17th the Battalion moved to the southern slope of Kiretch Tepe Sirt and took up an entrenched line. Orders came the following day to straighten the line between the right of the 1/5th Essex and left of the 162nd Brigade. "A" and "D" Companies led, supported by "B" and "C" Companies. Colonel Hawkins directed the right flank and Major Rimington Taylor the left. The Battalion, which advanced at 5.30 p.m., was not expected to be strongly opposed by the enemy, but a smart action quickly developed. The firing line moved forward in eight lines of platoons in snake formation, but the rocky ridges which ran at right angles to the position made the keeping of connection impossible. A guide led the left platoon of "D" Company to the spot where the left flank was to rest, but when he returned to place the next platoon on the right, fire was suddenly opened from the right front and Captain Harold Robert Tyler, commanding the company, was killed. He was buried two days later at Lone Tree Hill. His body was recovered by seven of his comrades from the spot where it lay some 400 yards from their trench. The officer and his six men went out unarmed, with a stretcher, but the Turks, by whom they could be clearly seen, did not fire upon them. Colonel Hawkins and another officer were wounded, whilst nine other ranks were killed. Major Rimington Taylor took over command and "C" Company was ordered up to the support of "A" and "D." The three companies entrenched on the ground gained. August 19th was occupied in consolidating the position, the Battalion having the 10th Londons on their right. The Battalion headquarters were placed in Lone Tree gully and connection established between firing line and Brigade by telephone. Three officers were wounded. Nine other ranks were killed and 32 wounded. A message was received from G.O.C. IX Corps stating that he was very pleased with the advance of the Battalion the day before. Sickness, particularly dysentery,



Rest Biliets at Hatfield Park, Gallipoli.

caused more casualties than enemy action and on August 21st the officers were redistributed as follows : " A " Company, Lieut. Marshall ; " B " Company, Captain Manbey, 2nd Lieut. New ; " C " Company, Captain Morgan Owen, Lieut. F. C. Donner, 2nd Lieut. Lockwood ; " D " Company, Captain Calthrop, Lieut. Attwood ; Assistant Adjutant, 2nd Lieut. Chitty. Four other ranks were wounded on that day. Half of the line was handed over to the 1st Essex (29th Division) on August 22nd. Battalion headquarters were on the " Razorback " at the top of Kiretch Tepe Sirt, " B " Company being on the extreme left of the whole line. One man was killed and another wounded and next day three men were killed and seven wounded. " A " and " D " Companies were sent to take over a portion of the trenches from the 88th Brigade on the 24th, when four men were wounded and two were reported missing. The commanding officer visited the whole of the front line trenches of the Brigade, including Jephson's Post (which was being held by the 1/5th Essex), also the Battalion's machine gun section, which had been doing duty with the 1/7th Essex. The 1st Essex were in the trenches on the right. The sector was handed over to the 33rd Brigade at 1.30 a.m. on August 27th, and the Battalion went to a rest area, the men being employed the next day in bringing up their packs from the base. Lieut. and Quartermaster William Henry Todd died suddenly of heart disease and was buried at Suvla Bay. The 54th Division was on the move to join the Australian and New Zealand Corps and the Battalion arrived at Lala Baba at 12.30 p.m. on the 29th. Heroic exertions were made to get up two water carts from the beach, but when the feat was accomplished the Battalion was ordered to leave them behind. August 30th was spent in fatigue duty and on the evening of the 31st the Battalion left with the 1/7th Essex for Anzac, arriving at midnight. Three men were wounded on the march. At 7.30 p.m. on September 1st the Battalion took over trenches from the 15th Australian Infantry. From the landing to the end of August 157 of all ranks were killed and wounded and 217 were evacuated sick, a total of 374.

5th The 1/5th Essex entrained from St. Albans at midnight on July 21st, leaving behind the transport personnel and animals. They arrived at Plymouth Docks at noon the next day and immediately embarked upon the s.s. " Grampian " of the Allan Line (Captain John Williams), with a strength of 29 officers and 649 other ranks. The staff of the 161st Brigade were also on board. The officers were : Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Welch, Major T. Gibbons, Major J. M. Heron, Captains W. E. Wilson, H. T. Argent, F. W. Bacon, A. Denton, C. A. Gould, Lieutenants E. B. Deakin, T. G. N. Franklin, W. H. Brooks, G. W. F. Bellward, E. Mackenzie Taylor, H. L. Yonge, B. Carlyon Hughes, H. Mavor, G. M. Nobbs, Second Lieutenants H. K. Chester, L. O. Womersley, C. Portway, J. L. French, R. S. Horton, C. O. Wilson, A. Colvin, J. F. Finn, A. E. Sheldon and R. Turner, with

Captain H. C. Bridges (Adjutant), Captain K. S. Storrs, R.A.M.C., and Rev. A. J. Sacre, C.F. Many of the members of the Battalion were not more than twenty years of age. One platoon officer relates that the average age of his command was well under 20 and that all except the N.C.O.'s had been drafted with him from Chelmsford. A few of them were only 16 or 17, having given a wrong age on enlistment. The only "old 'un" in the platoon was the company cook, whose son was also serving with him. The transport left at 8 a.m. on July 23rd, under destroyer escort. There was a challenge of identity at Gibraltar. Thereafter the Sirocco blew and the heat proved most trying. Some of the early risers saw the smoking cone of Etna ere the steamship entered Valetta harbour, Malta, on July 30th. The stay was brief, with the weather still continuing hot. Alexandria was made on August 2nd, where the Battalion had a route march whilst the transport was coaling. Alexandria was bidden adieu on August 6th, the Battalion leaving transport behind, and next day the harbour of Mudros, Lemnos, was entered. Good-bye was bidden to the "Grampian" on the evening of August 9th and the Battalion embarked on the "Hazel," water being taken aboard in two gallon cans. Without lights, the steamer made a quick voyage to Imbros, where anchor was dropped at 5 a.m. on August 10th. From this base heavy firing could be heard and as the dawn strengthened the shells could be seen bursting on the Peninsula. Fighting was proceeding fiercely all along the line. The Battalion left Imbros at 12.30 p.m. and amid an ever-increasing din, including a bombardment by cruisers, "A" Beach, Suvla Bay, was reached in the afternoon. The men were landed quickly without casualty and moved a short distance inland to await orders. A fatigue party, under Lieut. J. F. Finn, was left to unload approximately one million rounds of small arms ammunition in boxes. It was strenuous work, made the more exacting because of frequent messages urging more speed which were received from the skipper of the "Hazel," who wished to wash down preparatory to taking large numbers of wounded aboard. The men bivouacked near the beach. At 10 p.m. the Battalion was moved farther inland in reserve. When bivouacking it was understood that the Battalion would not be moved until next day and so when the order came to go forward the packs, which had been stacked by companies, were left behind and were not recovered again for ten days—ten days without blankets and greatcoats and wearing only khaki drill! The movement was in single file owing to the scrub of prickly oak—the 5th one of a line of six battalions. There were constant checks and touch was often lost owing to the scrub. After a march of four hours the Battalion stopped one and a half miles from the starting point. When dawn came the 5th Essex were found to be in full view of a range of hills and they were promptly moved into cover. In this position the Battalion remained for two days. "The fire from snipers," wrote an officer, "was particularly

disconcerting. Fire from the enemy's direction could be understood, but the sound of rifles and ping of bullets from the flanks and even the rear was totally unexpected. All day it kept up and was most vigorous at night. Occasionally, too, almost as though according to a preconceived plan, all the snipers seemed to increase the rapidity of their fire. The result was that troops behind the line almost felt as though they were actually in action. At one time news ran round of the existence of a well not very far away. As we were all parched and feeling the water shortage keenly a party was made up from "B" Company to fill water bottles. Later in the day another party was sent to this well, only to find it under armed guard, the R.A.M.C. having discovered that the water was not fit for human consumption. Doubtless many cases of sickness occurred in this way. Of course, later on, when the British force became more firmly established, all wells were under guard and water was issued to units in a regular manner." On the night of August 12th the unit went forward again, about half a mile, this time to second line trenches. The march was rendered extremely difficult by the necessity for keeping in close touch. At one time connection was lost and the Battalion had to return, to be guided afresh by the Brigadier. Colonel Gibbons relates the curious story that a staff officer came up and offered to act as guide, but as soon as he was told that the Brigadier was taking that duty he disappeared into the darkness without a word. Touch with the remainder of the Brigade was made and the Battalion took position in a field under shellfire. Digging-in was laborious, the earth being as hard as a brick, although when wet it had the consistency of glue. The movement of the Brigade in single file during the hours of darkness had caused some of the men to straggle and a party was detailed on August 13th to patrol a well-defined track for the purpose of directing them to their units. Slight protection from enemy observation was afforded by a low bank on the edge of a field and behind it the Battalion was formed in two lines. Concealment from enemy observation was, however, impossible and some attention was received from snipers, though, happily, the casualties were confined to a few slightly wounded men. The 163rd Brigade had attacked on the 12th, but thereafter the offensive did not progress and the Battalion remained holding on. A volunteer party of 24 set out under the Rev. Pierrepont Edwards to fetch in wounded of the 163rd Brigade and the thanks of the Brigadier were received for their gallant service. Before the party entered upon its task the Lord's Prayer was said. The day was extremely hot and one officer recalled years afterwards that the drink of tea which he had on coming off duty was worth several bottles of champagne. On August 14th orders were received to move forward to the relief of the 163rd Brigade. Lieut. Colvin, with a patrol, reconnoitred the ground and Lieut. MacKenzie Taylor, with a platoon, took a hillock from enemy snipers on the left front. At 4 p.m. the Battalion advanced over the mile of intervening

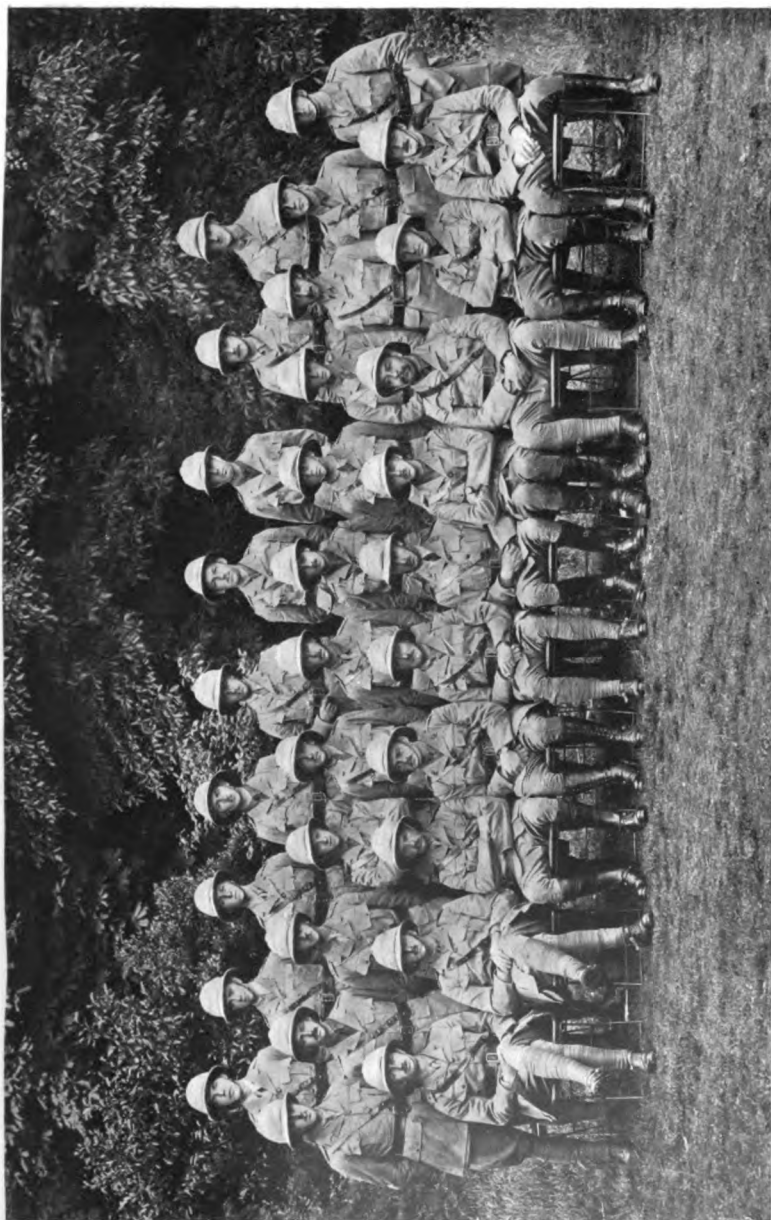
country in lines of platoons in single file, practically the only formation which could be used in the thick scrub which dotted the plain. There was fairly heavy rifle fire from the left, probably from small parties of snipers, who were adroit at concealment. Direction had to be changed twice to avoid going over the crest of a hill. These obstacles notwithstanding, the men moved steadily forward and the line occupied by the 5th Norfolks and the 8th Hants was reached. Platoons on the Battalion's right obtained touch with a brigade of the 53rd Division, between whom and the 163rd Brigade a considerable gap had existed. These platoons rejoined at dusk and the gap was filled by the 1/7th Essex. Colonel Gibbons mentions that the movement was made in full view of the Australians at Anzac and they said it was a really good advance to watch. Fourteen N.C.O.'s and men were killed and about sixty wounded. A few were missing, but most of them reported later. Lieut. Carlyon Hughes, of "B" Company, afterwards recalled that they came under shrapnel fire the moment they moved, but as most of the shells burst practically on the ground, they caused a lot of dust, with little damage. "The men were as keen as mustard to put up a good show. It was exceedingly difficult to keep direction after reaching the roughly cultivated ground. Wide ditches with hedges on either side ran at varying angles to the advance and were most confusing. After we got further forward we came under rifle fire and machine guns, but most of it was high or casualties would have been heavy. My batman, Private Joslin, walking just behind me, was first man hit in my platoon and the platoon sergeant said the man was shot through the head. In my inexperience I so reported him, but he was picked up two days later shot through the shoulder and made a good recovery. He rejoined the Battalion in Egypt and became a sergeant. As he was reported killed, his family received a message of royal condolence and this Joslin carried with him as a mascot for the rest of the campaign. By the time we reached cultivated land, the firing being hotter, we broke into the double, climbing through hedges and ditches. Some of us went too far to the right and in front of the line where we were supposed to occupy. I found myself with most of my platoon in one of the wide ditches, with hedges on either side, forming a good though shallow trench. Afterwards I was told we were in front of the Welsh, but until the position was ascertained the firing all round was disconcerting. I collected about 80 men of the 5th and some of the 7th and as I could find nobody on the right or left, I thought the only thing was to stay where we were. At dusk the fire slackened and, to my astonishment, Captain Deakin and a number of men came back from my front. He had got about 500 yards farther forward. We agreed to retire and about 500 yards behind my ditch we found the left Battalion of the 53rd Division. We had gone right across their front without realizing it. If we had gone on we should probably have suffered the fate of the Norfolks.

However, if there had been a concerted attack on that day and the Welsh had been ordered to go forward with us, I believe a thousand yards could have been taken without much loss. The men were willing and I do not think the Turks were either in great strength or very keen on meeting us." "I was in command of No. 5 Platoon, 'B' Company," wrote Lieut. Finn. "We went forward in broad daylight under clear observation of the enemy. Casualties occurred right from the commencement, several in my platoon in the first fifteen minutes. The sudden firing of a machine gun behind us was very disconcerting. The most trying feature for the junior officer was the lack of definite information as to where the Battalion was making for. After a little while 'B' Company came upon a cultivated area. The business of getting through the hedges made it difficult to keep touch, with the result that 'B' Company eventually found a brigade of the 53rd Division, while the other companies of the 5th Essex reached the 163rd Brigade of the 54th Division. The Welshmen had dug a good trench, except for its narrowness. We were very cramped and could not do anything in the way of improving the defences owing to overcrowding. After dark I received a message to make my way to my company commander (Major Heron) to receive orders. The only way to do this was to get out of the trench and walk along the top. I discovered that the line was not straight and so, after seeing the Major, I decided that with my orderly I would take a short cut back. This did not prove very easy in the dark and so after going some distance I called out, 'Is No. 5 platoon there?' I received an answering call and, going in its direction, found what appeared to be a British staff officer. With a somewhat noticeable accent he said to me, 'Come here, officer, and explain yourself. Who are you? What is your regiment and brigade?' Having heard my answers he turned again to the Welsh officer and asked him numerous questions with regard to the afternoon's operations. 'What was being attempted?' 'Was it supposed to be an attack, a demonstration or a relief?' I had too much else to think about then to speculate regarding these questions, but later I could not help thinking it strange that a British staff officer should be unaware of a carefully prepared operation which was carried out under definite orders. Probably he was the spy who approached the 5th Essex on the night of the 12th." There was considerable uncertainty concerning the position on the right and patrols were pushed out at night. One party was ambushed. 2nd Lieut. Ronald Turner, who had served in France with the Artists, and Sergeant Rice were killed, two men alone escaping. "As soon as it was dark," wrote an officer, "'B' Company moved off to occupy a fresh position on the right of the Battalion. In daylight this would have been a very easy movement, but owing to ditches, hedges and lanes in the pitch darkness and with very heavy sniping it was extremely difficult. We had to go in single file, my platoon being in rear of the company. From time to time

the Company halted while endeavours were made to discover the way. The men were so fatigued that many of them dropped asleep during these halts. After one longer stop then usual it was necessary for me to go along and rouse most of the men. This I did and I then saw what appeared to be another lying about two yards away. I put my hand on him to shake him—and found to my horror he was a dead Australian !” The sector held by the Battalion consisted of a lane, with a slight bank and thin hedge on each side, which afforded some cover from view, but which gave no protection from fire. The bank formed the parapet and the trench was dug behind it. Though tasks were set during the night, work proceeded slowly, for the men were tired out from the day’s exertions and lack of sleep. They were not yet acclimatized to the conditions. Whilst supervising the work of “A” Company on August 15th Captain Arthur Denton was killed by a sniper. One fact upon which the Battalion congratulated itself was that just to the rear was a small farmhouse whereat there was a well of good water. The absence of blankets was severely felt, for they would have provided warmth by night and protection from the heat during the day. The Battalion watched sharp fighting for possession of the “Razorback” (Kiretch Tepe Sirt) and at one time saw the Irishmen of the 10th Division cheering and waving their helmets on the crest. There was considerable activity on the front of the 54th Division, there being continual efforts by small enemy detachments to work round the flanks, whilst an aeroplane dropped bombs near the 1/6th Essex. Snipers were firing persistently from trees and had an old stone building near the well accurately marked. Everyone going thereto or to the medical aid post which was established in the building had to do so at the double, and even then many were hit. Several of the wounded, able to make their way up to the hut, were hit again when putting in a last rush to reach safety and the doctor. The loud reports, accompanied by bursts of flame when the bullets struck some stone walls in rear, also the extensive nature of the wounds, lent colour to the suggestion that explosive bullets were used, but Colonel Gibbons believed them to be caused simply by ordinary rifle fire at close range. The enemy, reinforced, were becoming aggressive and constantly wormed through the scrub to attempt a surprise. Colonel Welch shot two men within ten yards of the lane. The Battalion was withdrawn in the early morning of August 17th and it was daylight before it arrived at Brigade headquarters, the old Turkish headquarters, led by Australian guides. There water and stores were obtained. Whilst distribution was proceeding care had to be taken not to bunch together, but even so, there were several casualties. During the morning the Battalion was on the move again, this time to the north side of Kizla Dag. The intention was to relieve the Munsters on the Razorback. In small columns the Battalion made its way with difficulty to the post, suffering from shrapnel

fire, which proved particularly troublesome at the first hill and when crossing the ridge. One platoon of "D" Company had fourteen casualties. Several of the officers and men gave out completely from fatigue and had to be taken to the beach for a rest. "It had been a trying ordeal," wrote Colonel Gibbons, "for men who had no previous experience of war; the want of sleep and fresh food, the constant strain, the blazing heat, the black plague of flies, the dirt and squalor of it all, and, perhaps, more than anything else the all pervading smell of death had proved too much for others more hardened than they, and it was no disgrace that the ordeal had proved too severe for a time for some sorely tried natures to bear." Change was obtained in a sea bathe. The Battalion moved on again at night along the Dagh and took over Jephson's Post, on August 18th, one of the famous battle centres of the Suvla campaign. This sandbag redoubt was one of the two points at which the Kiretch Tepe Sirt touched 600ft., the other being known as the Pimple. At sunset, on August 7th, the Irish battalions of the 10th Division had reached within 100 yards of the point and then early on the following morning the 6th Munsters, under Major Jephson, took the knoll with a rush, hence the name by which it was known to the British force. The Irishmen later stormed the Pimple with the bayonet on August 15th, and they clung to it, despite deadly bombing by the Turks. Many officers and men of the 10th Division fell there, but the position was untenable and on the night of August 16th-17th they were withdrawn. "The Pimple was never recovered. Jephson's Post and the steep slopes leading down on either side, one to the sea, the other to the plain, remained the farthest points held by our lines along the Kiretch Tepe Sirt." Thus it was that the 1/5th Essex succeeded the Munsters at the famous Post and also took over the line down the northern slope to the sea. "The rock," wrote Colonel Gibbons, "was nearly bare and all it had been possible to do was to scrape out the fissures into something like trenches and fill up the gaps with sandbags. All movement by day had to be made on hands and knees in most parts of the redoubt." The Essex did what they could to strengthen the position during the night, amid the dead, helped by the searchlight of a destroyer, which lit up the enemy's position 300 yards away. The vessel was nicknamed the "Munsters' Guardian Angel," for when she put her searchlight up the side of the hill between the opposing lines there was no getting across unseen. "I remember," wrote an officer, "I took a party down the slope from the Razorback to bathe and one of the men, when stripped, was found to have about a dozen shrapnel bullets stuck in his back like plums in a cake. They had come with just sufficient force to stick in the skin. A comrade picked them out and he never reported sick or wounded." On August 19th Lieut.-

Colonel Welch left the Battalion sick and was later invalided to England. Evacuations of sick, both officers and men, were frequent, but the fighting went on. Warned by the bombing episode on the "Pimple," two officers from each Battalion in the Brigade had to go to the beach for a couple of hours' instruction in bombing, but those detailed found that the supplies were very crude, mostly of the "jam tin" variety. Few, if any, had had an opportunity to shave since landing and it was not until this date that, as one put it, "our disguises were removed and considerably improved our appearance." Lieut. Carlyon Hughes took a patrol from Jephson's Post on the night of the 19th to find out if the Turks had connected up their line between the plain and the "Pimple." He went up with Lance-Corporal Scruby and two men, with two New Zealanders to help with the scouting. The officer wore a woollen Balaclava helmet and when prospecting ahead to find the best way from the lines, he was threatened with arrest by the machine gunners of the Royal Naval Armoured Cars, who thought he was a Turk. With ten days' growth of beard on him and a woollen head covering, this was not to be wondered at. The search, however, was uneventful. The party went out from the southern side of the "Razorback" and when the front of the 4th Battalion was reached, they turned east. At the spot where Captain Tyler had been killed the rifles and cigarettes left behind in the fight were collected by members of the party, whilst Lieut. Carlyon Hughes and the New Zealanders went on far enough to hear the Turks digging and, as he says, "jabbering like a lot of magpies." On August 21st preparations were made to advance on the left should the attack of the 29th and 11th Divisions on the right succeed. Massed on the hill, the troops watched the fight which raged about Chocolate Hill and saw the advance of the Yeomanry, but no order was received to go forward and by 7 p.m. it was known that no such order would be given. On August 22nd the enemy concentrated attention upon Jephson's Post and 2nd Lieut. Archibald Edward Sheldon was mortally wounded in the head whilst working with a party on the parapet. Digging was difficult. There was a shortage of sandbags and the enemy used artillery at short range for blowing in the defences. Dysentery appeared and all ranks suffered severely. The Battalion was relieved on August 23rd and took cover under the northern side of the ridge, where Lieut.-General Sir Julian Byng, then commanding IX Corps, paid a visit, reminding the 5th that they were in his Division before the war. Bathing was a relief to the trying conditions and the pleasure was enhanced when an excellent spring of water was found half-way up the hillside. A transfer was made to the western slope of Lala Baba, on August 28th, where the Battalion dug in on the beach with ample cover from shell-fire, though some of the 1/7th Essex on the left were hit. The march thither was very trying, particularly on the sand at the water's edge. To men fagged out and in many cases in very



OFFICERS 16th BN. THE ESSEX REGT. BEFORE SAILING FOR GALLIPOLI.

Front Row (from left to right) : Capt. H. W. Bunch, Capt. G. L. Evans, Capt. P. D. Castle, Major H. P. Alexander, Lieut.-Col. R. F. Wall, Capt. and Adj. G. Disney, Major H. J. Ward, Capt. E. A. Gardner, Lieut. A. F. F. MacLachlan (R.A.M.C.), Lieut. & Quartermaster G. H. Pitt, Middle Row (left to right) : Capt. J. L. Sheldon, Capt. J. M. Sly, Lieut. R. A. Hyrons, Lieut. R. J. Newman, Lieut. K. D. Taylor, Lieut. R. D. F. Wall, Lieut. B. C. Westall, Lieut. L. J. Stenning, Lieut. A. C. Beeton, 2nd Lieut. C. W. Silverwood, Lieut. L. B. Rayner, Capt. E. A. Loftus, Back Row (left to right) : 2nd Lieut. F. F. Langridge, 2nd Lieut. L. E. Smith, 2nd Lieut. F. W. Tee, 2nd Lieut. W. L. Taverer, 2nd Lieut. A. H. Asker, 2nd Lieut. H. P. Taverer, 2nd Lieut. C. W. Randall, Capt. H. F. Silverwood, 2nd Lieut. J. R. Adams.

indifferent health, marching on the sand was most fatiguing. On the night of the 30th a move was made to "A" Gully in rear of the 4th Australian Brigade at Anzac, where the Battalion served until the evacuation. Major Heron and others were wounded during the march, the difficulty of which was increased by the still burning scrub and the reluctance of the mules to take this blazing trail.

The 1/6th Essex entrained at St. Albans on July 23rd, 1915, the right half under Lieut.-Colonel R. F. Wall and the left half under Major H. P. Alexander. The other officers were: Major B. J. Ward, Captains P. D. Castle, G. L. Evans, H. W. Bunch, J. M. Sly, E. A. Loftus, J. L. Sheldon, H. F. Silverwood, Lieuts. K. D. Taylor, L. B. Rayner, L. J. Stenning, R. A. Hyrons, R. J. Newman, B. C. Westall, A. C. Beeton, R. D. F. Wall, 2nd Lieuts. E. W. Tee, H. P. Tavener, J. R. Adams, A. H. Asker, L. E. Smith, F. F. Langridge, C. W. Silverwood, C. W. Randall and W. L. Tavener, with Adjutant (Captain G. Disney), Lieut. A. F. E. MacLachlan, R.A.M.C., Medical Officer, Rev. E. A. Gardner, Chaplain, and Quartermaster (Lieut. G. H. Pitt). Captain Walker had sailed previously in charge of the Brigade transport details, Lieut. K. D. Taylor was Brigade Machine Gun Officer and 2nd Lieut. R. D. F. Wall Battalion Machine Gun Officer. Captain Loftus, with Lieutenants Smith and Asker, remained at Alexandria in charge of the first reinforcement. The Battalion embarked at Devonport on July 4th on H.M.T. "Southland," there being also two companies of 1/7th Essex aboard. Sailing the same day, the transport arrived at Malta at 8 a.m. on August 1st, but left again at 7.30 a.m., having in the meantime sent C.S.M. Hicks to hospital with appendicitis. Alexandria was reached on August 4th, when a private was put ashore suffering from injuries received in falling through a hatchway. "Huge water melons and filth was my impression of the city," wrote a member of the 6th. The "Southland" entered Mudros Harbour on August 8th, being ordered next day to Imbros, where two days were spent on the ship. The 6th disembarked on the morning of August 11th at Suvla Bay from the "Southland" in two lighters propelled by oil engines. All ranks had been warned overnight to be ready to unload on to paddle steamers, but the order was countermanded. Between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m., however, the men were turned out of their bunks and had breakfast with the guns of the fleet firing over the lighters. The most exciting incident was an attempt to hit a hostile aeroplane flying overhead. When all had got on to the "beetle" the officers' steward came up and, from under a napkin, produced a bottle of whisky, the value of which was appreciated within the next few hours. The men went ashore singing "Oh, to be a farmer's boy." The land had a broken and stony appearance with range after range of hills beyond. The Battalion immediately moved half a mile inland. At 7 a.m. on the 12th the 6th Essex paraded before the G.O.C. Division, had breakfast, and then

moved to a new bivouac ground almost on the beach. Heavy fatigue work ensued until 1.30 p.m., when the unit moved forward to a position in reserve, understanding that it was to remain there for two days. Each man carried a blanket and two days' rations. The reserve water was taken in two gallon cans. The men moved in single file through the scrub for two hours. The growth was so dense that the reserve companies had no knowledge of what the front companies were doing. The Battalion returned to a gully where Indian pack mules were resting and the men lay down under cover until dawn, when a fresh position was occupied, affording better shelter from aeroplanes. There was a lack of information available for officers, of which the following is an example. Very late on the night of the 12th-13th August, when the Battalion was trying to get some sleep in the mule lines, Lieut. C. W. Silverwood was sent for to headquarters and ordered to find out whether the noise of marching troops and the rattle of accoutrements proceeded from British or enemy troops. The night, at that time, was very dark and misty, and he got within a few yards of a column before he could see the shadowy forms of men. The vernacular used when he hailed them left no doubt as to the nationality of the troops. They were, according to his recollection, the Hampshires. The Battalion also had an experience with an officer which confirmed information given elsewhere that Germans were counterfeiting the staff. In this case a staff officer appeared and said he had come from a unit on the left. He was so plausible that suspicions were not aroused until he was asked what division it was in and he then gave a number that was not in Gallipoli! Early on August 13th the Battalion moved forward to support the Norfolks, each platoon being in line of sections in file. Sniping was constant and machine gunfire was opened by the enemy on the leading sections. Some confusion ensued, for when "C" Company was within fifty yards of the trenches it was thought to be firing into our own troops. Bugles sounded "Cease fire," "Stand fast" and "Officers' call." Major Alexander, who was with the leading companies, was of opinion that they were blown by the enemy. It was later ascertained the firing was not from "C" Company, but from a considerable number of enemy snipers. This fire had already caused casualties when the companies were moving through the plantation in rear of the trenches, which were sited on the plain. The companies were withdrawn to the position from which they had started, the message being delivered from 54th Division, through O.C. 6th Essex, by Lieut. Tee, who carried it for about a mile. Enemy fire caused considerable casualties in "B" and "C" Companies during the return march. The men's morale was excellent, but they were very much fatigued. Polished mess tins were worn on the back, so that the naval gunners could see the troops, but they served another and more uncomfortable purpose when the men retired, for they then offered a good mark for the Turks.

"During this first real advance," wrote Lieut. C. W. Silverwood, "the men were splendid; it was their first taste of being under fire (except for a few 'overs' received the previous evening). I was commanding the leading platoon of 'C' Company, which was the leading company. My information was that we were going to attack, but the objective was only pointed out very vaguely; it seemed to me that the exact position of the enemy was not known at that time. We started the advance in line of sections in file and got into extended order on coming under rifle fire (I did not notice any machine gun fire). As the fire grew heavier we were forced to advance by rushes. Cover, fortunately, was ample, as about every 50 yards or so were dry ditches. After advancing for some time I discovered on looking from the ditch in which my platoon was waiting for further orders that there was another admirable dyke suitable for us about 50 yards ahead and gave the order to move forward. I left the cover myself with the two men on either side of me and hastened to the new ditch. On arrival I found that it was occupied by the 8th Hampshires. This was astounding, but I was distinctly worried when I found that the only two men with me were the two who had left our last jumping off place with me, no others had come; it was a horrible position for an officer to find himself in. While waiting for enough breath to enable me to return and see what was the matter, I was joined by my O.C. Company, Major Ward, and by his second-in-command, Captain Sly, both of whom only had one or two men with them. Almost immediately we saw the whole Battalion rise and retire, followed by considerable shrapnel fire. It transpired that the order to withdraw received from Division, or Brigade, had been delivered by Lieut. Tee at the psychological moment when we, the officers, had jumped from our cover to lead the men to the next point of vantage we could see. We rejoined the Battalion later after an exciting chase from the comparative safety of the Hampshire's 'trenches' through the undergrowth. Most of the excitement was caused by enemy snipers, behind our lines, taking pot shots at us. It was most unpleasant being in the position of hunted game." The Battalion reorganized in the gully and remained there the night. There was much effort at digging trenches, but without obvious result, for the ground was rocky. As they lay there some of the men kept "grouching" because someone was throwing stones, until they discovered the noise came from stray bullets. The losses comprised three officers wounded and two other ranks killed and 54 wounded, whilst several were missing. Sickness also made its appearance. The Battalion was relieved on August 14th and then moved forward in relief of the 163rd Brigade in single file by companies, three of which suffered somewhat from shrapnel, whilst there were also cases of sunstroke owing to the intense heat. By winding ways the unit at length reached undulating ground and then extended, though the difficulties of the ground caused some amount of "bunching."

Pressing on under rifle fire, the Battalion occupied the trenches from which it had been withdrawn the day before. Three companies arrived between 9 p.m. and 12.30 a.m. and the remaining company at daybreak. The 8th Hants were relieved and the 6th Essex occupied the position that night and the next two days. During the relief C.S.M. Rolph met a man of the Hampshires and asked him why he didn't go back. "I can't, I'm blind!" was the answer. Happily another Hampshire man was nearby, so they were sent back together. On the same day another man of a neighbouring unit was met who was at first taken for a Turk, for he was without tunic or boots. The poor fellow was unfortunately suffering from sunstroke. The Maxim guns had hitherto been carried by hand and it was only on this day that the loan of pack animals was obtained. The machine guns were made ready to support the 162nd Brigade, who were in reserve to the 10th Division attack on Kireteh Tepe on August 15th, but were not required. That afternoon there was rifle fire from the 1/7th and 1/5th Essex on the right and it became general all along the line, though no enemy was visible. There were no casualties, but nearly a score of officers and men were invalided to the base. The same night the Battalion was replaced by the 1/5th Suffolks and moved to support trenches in the rear of Jephson's Post. There the Durham Light Infantry and Munsters were relieved on August 16th by the 1/6th Essex, despite sniping and shrapnel fire, when seven other ranks were killed, two officers and nineteen other ranks wounded, with two missing. The following day the Adjutant (Captain G. Disney) was wounded, also nine other ranks, three men being returned as missing. There was a daily evacuation of sick. A brief shower of rain on one occasion was hailed with cheers. The water was caught in waterproofs and gave the men enough to have a wash. The troops could follow the fighting for Chocolate Hill away on the right. "We could see what we later knew to be the dismounted Yeomanry moving across Salt Lake, saw the grass and bushes catch fire and were excited because we thought we were pushing the Turks back. Had the attack been a success, I am certain we should have gone forward on the left, for we were all ready." The support trenches on the Razor Back were occupied on August 22nd, when Lieut. A. C. Beeton was killed, the first officer of the Battalion to fall. He was hit by shrapnel and was buried on the northern slope of the Razor Back. Five other ranks also were killed. Captain E. A. Loftus, with Lieutenants Asker and Smith, joined with the nucleus of 130 from Alexandria. The next day (23rd) the 1/6th Essex were relieved at Jephson's Post, which they had advanced sixty yards. They built a sandbag emplacement for a R.N.A.S. machine gun. The commanding officer (Lieut.-Colonel R. F. Wall) was wounded on August 25th and then two days later the Battalion moved back to a reserve position S.S.W. of Razor Edge. By night march on August 29th Lala Baba was reached, where the machine gun section put

their guns into carts. The Battalion was *en route* to Anzac and in the darkness of August 30th the men marched along the beach and the next day relieved the 13th Australian Infantry in their trenches. From August 23rd to 31st—a period of eight days—the 6th Essex lost four other ranks killed, seven officers and 21 other ranks wounded, seven officers and thirteen other ranks sick and one missing, a total of 53. A member of the Battalion wrote later that all who served at Suvla would be reminded of it by the smell of wild thyme and burning boxes—the fuel of the fires for making tea.

Writing of the first two months of active service, an officer of the 6th stated the chief enemies were not the Turks, who appeared demoralized and seldom took the offensive, but lack of food and water, fatigue, sickness and flies. There was a physical craving for a diet other than bully beef and biscuits, so that an onion was a luxury. There was no change from this food at all for the first month, except a Maconachie's ration, which provided a glorious feast. The great heat induced terrible thirst, the only relief from which was a pint of water daily, sometimes less. What water was obtained was carried arduously to the front line by fatigue parties and frequently no shave or wash was to be had for ten days. The water was strongly chlorinated, for fear of poison from the wells and under ordinary circumstances it would not have been drinkable. The scarcity of men made the work very heavy. When not on front line duty they were engaged in fatigues, carrying food and water from dumps at the Bay, and in digging, so that there was very little time for sleep. The troops became so tired that they would lie down at any time and anywhere and drop asleep at once. Casualties and sickness also caused a lack of officers and one company of the Battalion had only one officer for two months. Dysentery was a very serious handicap and men were often on duty suffering from this complaint. Major Ward, of "A" Company, refused to leave, although confined to his dug-out and suffering greatly for a week before he was carried off. Flies were so thick that they were a continual pest and, as a foolish order was issued not to use gauze, the food was black with flies as soon as it was uncovered. At the end of September the only officers left were Major Alexander, Captains Castle and Loftus and Lieutenants Tee, Wall and Hyrons, and it was the middle of October before fresh drafts began to arrive.

For the purposes of embarkation, the 7th Essex were divided—"A" and "B" Companies, under Captain W. R. Johnson, sailing on July 24th, 1915, in H.M.T. "Southland," with the 6th Essex and a party of nurses. The other portion of the Battalion, "C" and "D" Companies, machine gun section and the Battalion headquarters, under Major H. F. Kemball, entrained at St. Alban's at 4.50 a.m. on July 26th, and upon reaching Devonport at 2.30 p.m. were embarked on H.M.T. "Braemar Castle." The 5th Bedfordshires were already on board. As soon as the 7th Essex were clear of the quay, tugs came alongside

and at 5.30 p.m. the transport was on its way. The officers with the Battalion were: Major H. F. Kemball, in command, Lieut. R. A. Stubbings, Adjutant; Captains W. R. Johnson, G. G. Ewer, George Johnson, G. Shenstone, F. R. Waller, R. Jenner Clarke, D. H. Pearson, A. Graham (Medical Officer), Lieutenants E. Whur, R. Warner (Quartermaster), E. W. Broadberry, J. R. Eve, S. C. W. Hearn, L. F. H. Bailey (Machine Gun Officer), J. Schofield, S. A. Mackie, G. Jones, 2nd Lieutenants G. Hetherington, E. Lewis, H. Pelly, J. G. Kemball, A. H. F. Harwood, A. G. Johnson, D. M. Penrose, C. Needell, F. Ll. Thomas and A. R. Carpenter. A nucleus of about 120 officers and other ranks, under Captain G. Johnson, with Lieut. Eve and 2nd Lieut. Lewis, remained at Alexandria, and this reduced the strength of the Battalion to about 750. This party rejoined in Gallipoli about ten days later, with the exception of 2nd Lieut. Lewis, who had contracted enteric fever. The transport section, under Lieut. A. Young, was left behind at St. Albans. As a precaution, a submarine watch was kept by the machine gun sections of both Battalions. The 5th Beds had two guns mounted forward and the 7th Essex two guns right astern. The outward voyage was without incident. The transport was at Malta on August 3rd, but only stayed two hours, from fear of submarine attack. Alexandria was reached on the afternoon of August 6th, where all surplus kit was dumped and the nucleus disembarked. The next day the Battalion went ashore for a route march through the town, returning by lunch time. At 4 p.m. the Battalion sailed from Alexandria for Mudros, which was reported early on August 10th. There was only a brief stay for orders and the "Braemar Castle" went on to Imbros, where the "Southland" lay in waiting. The Battalion was told that it would land at Suvla Bay at dawn the next morning (August 11th). "Reveille being at 2 a.m.," wrote an officer, "all went to bed early to get as much sleep as possible. When I was awakened just about 2 a.m. I found the ship already moving. No lights were allowed, so breakfast was served in the saloon about 3 a.m. with the help of two or three candles—personally, I had not got much appetite for kippers at that hour. We reached Suvla Bay and anchored off it just after daybreak on August 11th. After some little delay, 'beetles' (lighters driven by motive power) came alongside, into which the troops were packed as tightly as possible. We landed at 'A' Beach with no interference from the enemy. Some delay in landing was caused by one of the 'beetles' running on a sand bank. Enemy aeroplanes came over while we were landing and dropped bombs on to the shipping, but scored no hits." The remainder of the Battalion landed at "A" Beach West. About 1.30 p.m. on August 12th the Battalion moved forward to take up a position preparatory to the attack on Teke Tepe and Kavak Tepe. The Brigadier took the commanding officers and adjutants to the forward slope of a hill and pointed out the objectives, but there were no written

orders or any preliminary reconnaissance. The 4th and 5th Essex were to constitute the firing line, with the 6th Essex in support and 7th Essex in reserve, with a battleship to give covering fire. The 163rd Brigade was in the meantime to have made good the jumping off place in Kuchuk Anafarta Ova, but as this was not successful, the attack of the 161st Brigade, which was planned for the dawn of August 18th, was cancelled and the 7th were withdrawn to a reserve line. Seventeen other ranks were wounded. On August 14th the Brigade had orders to relieve the 163rd Brigade in the front line. The movement was made in daylight at 4 p.m., the direction given being vague, "Go east and you will find them." "As the advance was over open country overlooked by the enemy," wrote an officer, "it is difficult to understand why the relief could not have been effected after dark, except for the gap in the line which had to be filled." Directly the Turks saw the Battalion moving forward they opened a fairly accurate shrapnel fire on to the troops, which, however, did not cause many casualties among the 7th, who moved in two lines of companies with platoons in echelon at thirty paces interval and 200 paces distance. Two officers, Captain Shenstone and 2nd Lieut. A. G. Johnson, were wounded. The men were very heavily loaded, as in addition to 120 rounds per man and the ordinary equipment, everything had to be manhandled, including machine guns, water cans, picks, shovels, etc. All ranks behaved splendidly, however, in the Battalion's baptism of fire. Enemy snipers caused much trouble, because they did not withdraw with the rest of the troops, but remained behind the lines and tried every target that was presented. It was particularly trying to be shot at from behind. Eventually, shortly after dark, the Battalion came into the line on the right of the 5th Essex, thus filling the gap between the latter unit and the 53rd Division. During the advance the leading lines got their left shoulders up and as a consequence went too much to the right and into the line held by the Welshmen. The rear lines, however, noticed this inclination, kept better direction and arrived according to plan. They found the Norfolks very tired and badly in need of a rest after their tragic experience. The day's casualties totalled 25. The Battalion machine gun section had no easy time of it. As soon as the Battalion came under fire Private Ashton, the youngest gunner in the section, was mortally wounded by shrapnel and this and several other casualties which followed rapidly caused many changes in the composition of the gun teams, resulting in part of the equipment having to be left behind. Early the next afternoon, when an attack threatened, the C.O. asked that the machine gun section should, if possible, be sent up to assist in dealing with the attack. When moving forward it suddenly came under heavy fire, which again caused several casualties, as a consequence of which both tripods were lost. The Section Sergeant (Sergeant Skinner) was never seen again. He was presumably wounded and crawled into

cover, where he died. The tripods served out to replace those lost were old Mark II pattern, very heavy, cumbersome and with a kind of bicycle seat on the rear leg. They only allowed a traverse of about 60 degrees and owing to the length of legs would not fit the customary type of emplacement. Consequently when the Battalion moved to Hill 60 in September tripods were borrowed from the Suffolks until such time as the 7th held positions farther back which were constructed to take the old Mark II tripods. A tale is told about this period, which illustrates the difficult nature of the warfare and the confusion which it caused. The scene, we are told, was a dark night, with weary troops. Footsteps were heard and a dark shape emerged of an obviously senior British officer. "Have you seen the ——— Brigade?" "No, sir!" "Have you seen the brigadier of the ——— Brigade?" "No, sir." "Oh, well, I've lost them." A short interval, during which the dark shape sat down. Then another dark shape loomed up and spoke: "Have you seen the ——— Brigade?" "No, sir." "Have you seen the brigade-major of the ——— Brigade?" "No, sir." First dark shape, rising, then muttered to himself, "Thank goodness, I've found somebody at last," and answered aloud, "I'm here, sir." The trenches followed the line of a lane with a hedge and bank on either side. There was practically continuous hostile rifle fire all night and about 2 a.m. a party of Turks was seen approaching. A sniper was killed when trying to get into the back of the trench and the persistence of the enemy in this respect was made plain next morning, when three Turks and a German cadet officer were found outside a low barricade situated at the extreme right of the line. At noon a message was received from the left that the enemy was massing all along the front and about 2 p.m. they were seen advancing, apparently in an endeavour to envelop the right flank of the trench held by the 7th, where there was a gap of about 400 yards between 161st and 159th Brigades. The threat did not fructify, although orders were received for the 7th to retire. As the circumstances did not seem to warrant that course, the order was not carried out and the Battalion hung on. Reinforcements from the support line closed the gap. Seventeen other ranks were wounded. Several narrow escapes were reported. Major Kembball, whilst reconnoitring, had a bullet through his sun helmet, which, fortunately, only caused a slight graze. Major Johnson, the second-in-command, was hit by a bullet which passed across his stomach through his belt, but, fortunately, it only grazed the skin. The machine gun officer (Lieut. L. F. H. Bailey) had a bullet through his water bottle. On August 16th the 7th prolonged their line and linked up with the 159th Brigade. There was sniping at the Turks and some of the men got quite excited at what they termed "big game shooting" until a sergeant had the side of his rifle ripped out by a bullet. August 17th was a quiet day, although the losses from shellfire and snipers totalled 21. Physical exhaustion and dysentery also depleted the fighting

strength very considerably. The incessant work was due largely to the wide frontage which was held and, for this reason, little rest could be obtained. Orders were received that relief would be undertaken by the Welsh Division and everything was got ready, but as no troops arrived, it seemed as if other orders had been issued. However, shortly before dawn on August 18th the incoming troops appeared, but the delay caused a good part of the march back to be undertaken in daylight. The Brigade ration dump was in full view of the Turks and so the Battalion drew supplies as quickly as possible and moved off towards Karakol Dag. The Turks shelled the dump, but were too late to catch any but the last company, which suffered half a dozen casualties. At 6 p.m. the same day Irish battalions were relieved in the trenches of Kiretch Tepe Sirt, facing S.E. from Jephson's Post. The line was improved and deepened, though both on the 19th and 20th the enemy were quiet, save for shrapnel fire, which caused a single casualty each day. The 1/4th Essex, having straightened out the line, were actually in front of the system occupied by the 1/7th and thus the latter automatically went into support. In the afternoon of the 21st August the attack was launched against Ismail Oglu Tepe and those on the left could see little of it owing to the mist and the smoke from shells and burning gorse. The Brigade had received orders to be in readiness to exploit success, but as the offensive failed, no order to move was received. Whilst on Kiretch Tepe Sirt small parties were allowed to go down to the sea to bathe. The climb down from the top of the hill, which was some 600ft. high, took about half an hour and although the bathe was delightful, the climb back in the broiling sun made one wonder whether it was worth it. This method was, however, the only way to get a wash, as the water supply was barely sufficient for drinking and none could be allowed for washing or shaving. The Battalion, therefore, began to look distinctly dishevelled, for nobody had shaved for a week. On Sunday, August 22nd, Lieut.-Colonel C. L. Flick, of the British Columbia Horse, took over command, the same day that the Battalion moved back and dug a line running from the top of the hill at right-angles to the ridge and down to the sea. This was termed a reserve line and the troops were supposed to be resting whilst digging it. Otherwise, beyond a small amount of shrapnel fire and some long range sniping, there was very little doing. The Battalion also supplied working parties to assist in digging the front line running south down the hill from Jephson's Post—a heavy task, as the ground was practically solid rock. On August 27th the Battalion went back into brigade reserve on Karakol Dag, during which move four casualties were sustained. Two days later it was transferred to the beach below Lala Baba. This hill had fairly steep sides on the seaward slope and the beach thereunder was narrow, so that the 7th felt fairly safe, even though the Turks were fond of shelling a battery nearby. It was, however, a "poisonous

spot, which received 'overs' aimed at the shore batteries and 'shorts' intended for the naval vessels." When the rations came along next morning there was an issue of bread, to the great delight of the troops. Unluckily, just as the food was being distributed, a shell came over and burst right in a group of men, causing some 48 casualties, of whom eight were killed. It was the most severe day's loss so far of the campaign and cast a gloom over everyone. The men thoroughly enjoyed the bathing at Lala Baba, in spite of the shelling. The first experience of Maconachie rations was tremendously popular, though they proved too rich for some who had been subsisting on bully beef and biscuits since landing. At 8.45 p.m. on August 31st the Battalion marched to Anzac and at 1 a.m. went into bivouac in Australia Valley. On the march Captain Roberts, R.A.M.C., was killed by a stray bullet.

AT ANZAC.

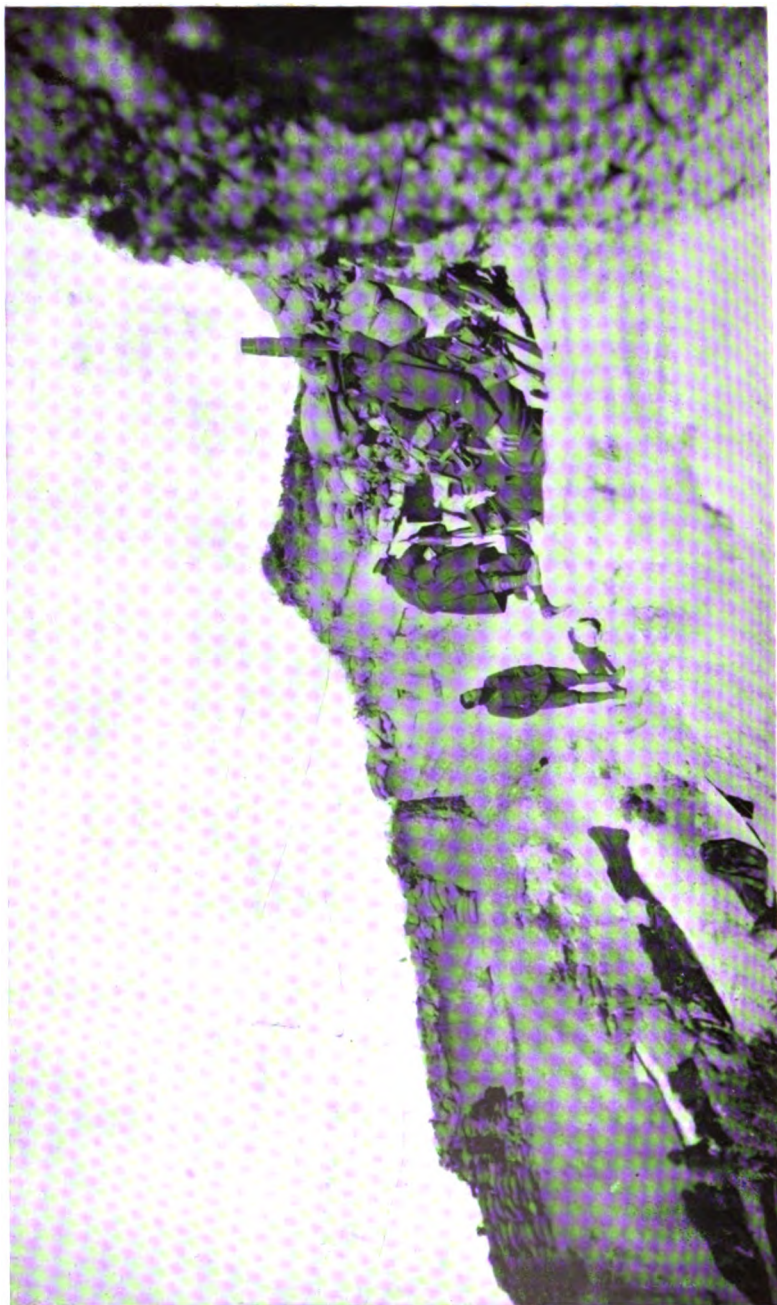
The 54th Division were moved to Anzac at a time when, according to the G.O.C., his narrative of battle incidents had ended. "From this date onwards up to the date of my departure on October 17th the flow of munitions and drafts fell away. Sickness, the legacy of a desperately trying summer, took heavy toll of the survivors of so many arduous conflicts. No longer was there any question of operations on the grand scale, but with such troops it was difficult to be downhearted." The role of the Division was, therefore, confined to holding the line amid an increasing toll of sickness, which reduced some battalions almost to vanishing point and which caused the divisional commander to remark on October 31st, "Work on No. 4 section during October has been greatly handicapped by sickness. A very large number of men have been evacuated sick and but very few come in to replace them. No reinforcements at all have been received from home and but a few returned sick and wounded from Egypt and Mudros have come in." The casualty returns of the 161st Brigade illustrate the drain which sickness made upon the personnel. During the three months prior to evacuation—September, October, November—the casualties by enemy action comprised two officers and 33 other ranks killed and eight officers and 103 other ranks wounded, a total of 146. The transfers to hospital from disease were:—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
September ..	15	673
October ..	16	644
November ..	14	342
	<hr/> 45	<hr/> 1,659

The paucity of reinforcement is shown by the fact that during the stay of the 161st Brigade at Anzac drafts of less than 200 officers and men reported for duty. On October 6th thirty officers arrived for attachment to the battalions of the 161st Brigade and the next day a detachment of 83 other ranks for the 1/4th Essex



ANZAC BEACH, GALLIPOLI, 1915.



ANZAC : Romford Road Trenches.

and 95 for the 1/6th Essex. Then early in November two officers and 70 other ranks landed for the 1/7th Essex and an officer and 15 other ranks for the 1/4th Essex. In the opening days of November the strength of the brigade was only a little over 1,100 other ranks and the wastage was at the rate of 120 per week. An officer who joined the 6th Essex at the beginning of October, 1915, found the companies much under strength, about 70-80 rifles. This left very few men to garrison the company frontage, which really required a full complement. "This shortage of men meant that the private soldier only got one full night's sleep in about eight or ten days. No wonder it was a job keeping the sentries awake at night. Enteritis or jaundice had pretty nearly infected everybody. This trouble was no doubt aggravated by the very small area of ground held by the Army at Helles, Anzac and Suvla. For example, the trenches held by the 54th Division at Anzac comprised only one fire trench and if the Turks had taken that it meant fighting in the open; there was nothing to fall back on, not even a redoubt. However, the Turks had dysentery and other sickness worse than we did and all their energy was used up in consequence. One point struck me forcibly afterwards. The R.A.M.C. in Palestine ordered all refuse to be burnt. This was not done on the Peninsula, unfortunately, and I feel sure insistence upon that safeguard would have saved many lives."

The only offensive operation contemplated was to extend the hold of the army upon Hill 60, which, "resembling the back of a large tortoise with the markings picked out in white," commanded the communication between Anzac and Suvla. It had been converted by the Turks into a fortress, but that did not prevent its partial seizure by Major-General Cox on August 27th. Our line was established along the summit, but the eastern half was never wrested from the enemy. The position held was a salient, which could be enfiladed from the Koja Chemen Tepe—Chunuk Bair ridge, and a series of dug-outs was essential for protection from enemy fire. The Turks tried to bomb the troops out on several occasions, but the range of 60 yards was too great and they mostly burst in No Man's Land. On Hill 60, however, trench blocks only separated the combatants and the missiles the British had to hurl in reply were grenades hastily manufactured from jam tins timed by fuses lighted by matches. Blankets were often successfully used to smother the effects of hostile bombing. Throughout September and October preparations were made by the 54th Division to complete the capture of the hill and early in the latter month the 163rd Brigade, to which the chief task was allotted, was strengthened by the inclusion of 1/7th Essex, the 1/8th Hants. being transferred to the 161st Brigade for three months. The preparatory work included the sinking of mine shafts, the provision of means for crossing the wire and organization of artillery support. The weather was fine and warm, though the colder nights heralded the approach

of winter. On October 4th orders were issued for the assault by the 163rd Brigade "on a date to be fixed later," in which, after the mines had been exploded, a vigorous fusillade was to be maintained by the 161st and 162nd and Indian Brigades against their immediate front. The machine guns of the former Brigade were placed so as to bring enfilade fire to bear on the southern and eastern slopes of Hill 60. Towards the end of October alternative proposals were made for more localized action on account of the debilitated state of the Division and the uncertainty of reinforcements. Although mining operations went on vigorously meanwhile, on October 29th the operation order was cancelled and the attack did not, therefore, mature. The project was revived early in November, but was again finally cancelled on November 14th. Hill 60 was the scene of a plucky reconnaissance on the night of September 26th-27th by Lieut. Herbert Richard Pelly, of 1/7th Essex. He surveyed the enemy position and found that quantities of wire were placed on trestles 3ft. 6in. high, whilst similar material was pegged down immediately in front of the trenches at a height of nine inches for a width of five yards. The wire had been damaged by the British shellfire and Lieut. Pelly was of opinion it would not prove a formidable obstacle to attacking troops. He later fell a victim to his zeal. After visiting the trenches of 1/5th on October 9th, in order to get better observation of the enemy's position in front of the 1/7th Essex, he had a second look at another part of the line and was instantly shot dead by a bullet through his head.

Apart from the features mentioned above, there was little beyond the routine to report. On the night of September 14th-15th posts were thrown out by the 161st Brigade to connect with the left of the 162nd, the line having previously overlapped. Work upon new trenches was commenced and continued during the succeeding nights. Wire entanglements were placed in both branches of the Aghyl Dere by the 162nd Brigade and in view of possible floods during the winter season, the defence of the ravines was arranged to be carried out from posts established above high water mark on either side. On the night of September 15th the enemy advanced their barricade at the end of Beech Lane against the 163rd Brigade and bombed the garrison, who were at a disadvantage because they could not throw the heavier bombs over the required distance. The next night, however, the Brigade barricade was advanced five yards, enabling enemy aggressiveness to be neutralized. By the night of September 17th the 161st Brigade had connected with the 162nd Brigade and also completed a communication sap. The next day the trenches were manned in expectation of a Turkish attack because of heavy gunfire, but it died away and nothing further happened.

The divisional commander had not been satisfied with the division's digging, but after the issue of special orders about this time he noted signs of improvement in the construction of fire and communication trenches and dug-outs. Reference to

trench digging was also made by an officer of the 1/5th Essex (Lieut. J. F. Finn), who explained some of the difficulties which faced the regimental officer: "Early in September my platoon was engaged on the long, sharply sloping communication trench leading to Hill 60. This was a difficult and uncomfortable task, for two reasons—firstly, because of continuous sniping; secondly, because, being enfiladed, it was extraordinarily narrow. This meant that whenever an officer or N.C.O. wished to proceed along the trench to give orders or to inspect the work it was a real struggle to squeeze past each man. This made supervision very difficult. It was a time of real hard work, as we knew that our efforts would be compared with those of the Anzacs, who were skilful diggers. Just at dusk we used to fall in and march up in single file from the gully in which we rested by day. Owing to the nearness of the enemy's trenches we had to keep as quiet as possible, and when digging all loud talk or laughter was forbidden. The return from the trenches in the morning had to be completed before light and I recollect some strong language being used by a senior New Zealand officer when he feared we would not be out of the trench system before dawn and our movements would become noticeable to the Turks. One extremely unpleasant feature was the awful stench from dead bodies lying in 'No Man's Land,' an odour to which we never became accustomed." Later in the same month he wrote, "Our principal task was that of digging a fairly wide and deep communication trench to allow of movement from the base to Australia Valley free from observation. The 54th Division was responsible for its construction and most of the units provided working parties at various times. This task gave much concern to the junior officers. They knew that the work done would be inspected the next day and were anxious to avoid adverse reports. On the other hand, their men were very weak and incapable of really hard work for long. The time of the officers was spent in going along the trench continually urging the men to greater efforts." When the Welch Yeomanry arrived, however, the skill in digging much improved, for many of the men were miners. Arms drill and bathing parades, with instruction in bomb-throwing, were carried out daily as opportunity offered. Maxims were told off for use against aircraft, one each from the 161st and 162nd Brigades. One detachment, on the night of October 1st, was struck by a shell and one man was killed and four wounded. At the end of September there was enemy shellfire upon the junction of 161st and 162nd Brigades, which did damage to the trenches, but inflicted little loss in personnel; the bombardment was in retaliation for the shelling of Hill 100 and the trenches to the south of it. Some excitement was caused on October 9th by a report from the Indian Brigade that a gas cylinder had been seen on Hill 60 and that some of the 6th Ghurkas had suffered from the effects of gas. The report was not confirmed by the 163rd Brigade, but as a precaution all the troops were

warned. In the early days of October the Anzac garrison was strengthened by the arrival of the Eastern Mounted Brigade, and the Norfolk Yeomanry and Suffolk Yeomanry were attached to the 161st and 163rd Brigades respectively for the purpose of training in trench warfare. The weather, which had been warm and sunny, gradually became colder and there was some rain. Major-General Inglefield, the divisional commander, went sick on October 6th and the command of the Division temporarily devolved upon Brigadier-General Daniell, Major Fergus taking charge of the 161st Brigade. General Inglefield did not resume command until November 12th. The enemy, by a heavy fusillade, sought to force the troops to show their hand, but it evoked no response. When the British tried to do the same on October 16th by means of 6in. howitzers directed on Hill 60, the Turks also lay low. There was some expectation of trouble at the feast of Bairam, which took place towards the end of October, but although the Turks were reported to be very active, there was no hostile demonstration. On the morning of October 28th a mine exploded on Hill 60 and a machine gun fired upon the debris immediately, but the targets were not so good as had been hoped for. There was another explosion on November 15th, when better results were obtained. The Turks established forward posts on Laindon Hill on November 8th, about 100 yards from the divisional line, and next day a bomb firing catapult was used with great effect upon them. The wells failed in the 161st Brigade area and extra water to the extent of one gallon per man was sent up. The scarcity of washing water led to the deepening of the wells in the Agayl Dere and Stafford Gully, but this expedient was not effective in increasing the supply. To replace broken petrol tins, fifty fantassis were obtained from Anzac for water carrying, it being found that the petrol tins had the three-fold disadvantage of taking a long time to fill and to empty and, being easily broken, they were difficult to mend. A canteen party which was proceeding to Imbros was stopped upon receipt of a wire that practically all the stores had been sold out. Warning that gas might be used was issued on November 9th and two days later three deserters surrendered, one to each brigade. Plans were forwarded by C.R.E. for the construction of a new system of fire trenches in two sections—(a) to cover the dead ground from Laindon Hill, which lay on the western slope of Hill 100, to Carisbrook Post, to the north-west of the Hill, all of which was within the area of the 161st Brigade; (b) for connection of Norfolk Street through Gillespie Hill with Australia Valley, which lay to the north of the 161st sector. These works were never carried out; for there was a lack of men to undertake them and within a few days other orders came. The close proximity of winter caused a revised scale of rations to be issued on November 18th, to come into force on December 1st, which, at the risk of being a little tiresome, is given in full: Fresh meat, 1lb., or preserved, one ration; bread, 1lb., or biscuit or flour, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb.; bacon, 4 oz.; milk,

$\frac{1}{2}$ th tin; rice, 4oz. (five issues per week); oatmeal, 4oz. (two issues weekly); jam, 3oz.; sugar, 3oz.; cheese, 3oz.; dried fruit, 3oz. (when fresh vegetables were not issued); tea, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.; salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.; mustard, 1-50th oz. (six issues per week); pepper, 1-30th oz. (six issues per week); curry powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. (one issue per week); lime juice, 1-10th gill (two issues per week); tobacco or cigarettes, 2 oz. weekly. Fresh vegetables, when available, were to be issued at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. in the place of dried vegetables and dried fruit. Half a gill of rum was to be allowed at the discretion of the Corps Commander, in lieu of which $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of cocoa or chocolate could be given to those preferring it. Winter stores were also to be served to the division, including trench braziers, oil stoves, portable stoves, gum boots, washing and bath tubs, Punjab boilers, Servian disinfectors and, what is doubly interesting to Essex men, a number of Thresh disinfectors, so named because they were in the invention of Dr. J. C. Thresh, formerly Medical Officer for the County. On the night of November 26th-27th the Division was relieved; the 161st and 162nd Brigades by a brigade of New Zealand Mounted Rifles and the 163rd Brigade by the Eastern Mounted Brigade, to which the Indian Brigade was attached. The movement was much delayed by a severe rainstorm, which flooded the trenches and saps, and made the deres practically impassable—it was the storm which struck the Suvla army and by its disastrous effects strengthened the feeling in favour of evacuation. Whilst in the rest area a stormy north-easter blew, bringing snow on the night of the 28th. The two following days were very cold, but the wind had died away by the last day of the month. On December 8rd the Division marched down after dark to Anzac Beach and by means of lighters was transferred to s.s. "Ermine" and "El Kahareh," which sailed for Portinos Camp, Mudros, during the night. The 54th were not to see the Peninsula again, for in the middle of December the Division was ordered to Alexandria. The Brigade embarked in the "Marathon" on December 13th and on the 17th landed at Alexandria and marched to Mex camp, with the rest of the Division.

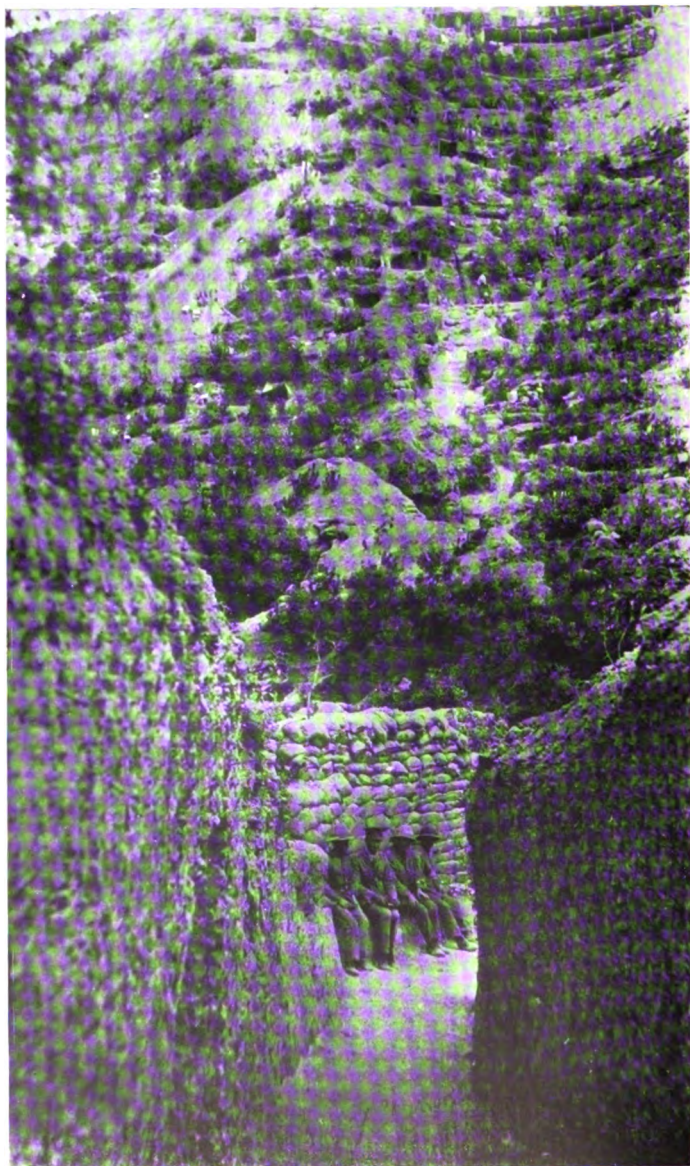
The Essex Infantry Brigade left their mark on the trench system of Suvla, as their comrades of the 1st Essex had done on that on Helles. Among the names recorded are Stratford Broadway, Maldon Road, Upton Park, Essex Road, Romford Road, Barking Gully, Warley Gap and Clacton Terrace. The best-known of all, however, was Laindon Hill, on the western slope of Hill 100. Its naming came about in this wise. "On September 23rd," says Colonel Gibbons, "the 5th took over a new piece of line from the 4th Essex. It ran for the most part along the crest of the steep southern slope of the Kaiajik Dere and covered the head of another deep dere on the right. The enemy lined the opposite side of the dere. At the head of the Kaiajik we had 200 yards of scrubby level ground between us. We called this point Laindon Hills." The view therefrom was magnificent.

"Shall I be accused," wrote another officer, "of making invidious comparisons if I describe 'Barking Gully' as being more picturesque than anywhere in Barking, Essex? I lived in a dug-out in the former for many days. A steep hill sloped down from the firing line to a communication trench. On this hill are the numerous cave-like dwellings in which have been stationed from time to time many of our boys. From the top of the hill, especially at sunset, can be seen the most wonderful spectacle I have viewed. A wide expanse of Aegean Sea is there—the sea so much crossed by St. Paul. Straight ahead, some miles away, can be seen Imbros Island, where are hundreds of Turkish prisoners. Samothrace, mentioned in the New Testament, a mountainous island, is away on the right, whilst in the evening, when the sun is behind the land, places not discernible by day are visible. Mount Athos, far away on the Greek mainland, and the coast of Turkey in the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Saros come into view. When to this is added all the battleships, cruisers, monitors, destroyers, hospital ships, transports and tugs that crowd the areas around the landing stages, all brought here by war, one has a spectacle that is gazed at with wonder evening after evening. Conway, an officer of ours, a skilful artist, was very quick to take the opportunity." Some of the latter's Gallipoli sketches were published later.

The Brigade headquarters subsequently became known as Hatfield Park and there, on an October Sunday, some of the 1/5th Essex found that it was not proof against shrapnel when attending service in the gully conducted by the Chaplain, Rev. B. K. Bond. The headquarters dug-out had been selected for the service. Two biscuit boxes formed the altar, over which was spread the linen cloth brought in the portable communion set by the "padre." "A number of shells burst over us," wrote one who was present, "and one man was wounded. As a result, Holy Communion, which followed, was celebrated in front of battalion headquarters, the celebrants kneeling in single file down the sandbag protected path leading away from the dug-out." Mr. Bond later became famous in the brigade for his photographs, particularly of the Essex battalions going into action at Gaza.

Colonel Gibbons records that the Australians welcomed the Essex men most kindly and were ever ready to teach them the points of trench warfare, in which they had become adepts. As a consequence, many county cap badges and buttons found their way to Australia as souvenirs in exchange for cigarettes and other luxuries. "Organization at Anzac," the Colonel adds, "had had time to get into working order and there was a marked increase in comforts of all kinds. The Australian and New Zealand Governments looked after their troops well and, it may be added, no troops knew better how to look after themselves."

Whilst at Anzac, as Battalion narratives will reveal in greater detail, the weather grew colder and brought a change of clothing and in the methods of living until the conditions became so



Communication Trenches and Dugouts leading to Quinn's Post.

wintry that the hardships suffered by the troops played no small part in the decision to evacuate. "When we left England," said a member of the 161st Brigade, "we brought tropical outfits. Sun helmets, drill uniforms, very thin underclothing, mosquito nets and fly whisks. These proved entirely suitable at first. Indeed, we went about in shorts and got our knees brown. We left off tunics and either turned up or cut off our shirt sleeves, thus getting sunburnt arms, whilst our shirts were left open to give us nice brown chests. But now the weather has turned decidedly colder. Helmets have been replaced by service caps. Khaki suits and thick grey flannel shirts, such as are worn at home, have been issued. Overcoats are much in evidence in the early morning and evening. Quartermasters' talk is of such things as gumboots and cardigans. 'Dug-outs' are being cut deeper into the earth so as to give greater protection from the wind and rain, and in every way the change in dress and living occasioned by the weather, from that of two months ago, reminds one of a theatrical transformation scene. Another sign of approaching winter has been the flock of wild geese that have noisily passed over the Peninsula on their way to the warmer northern shores of Africa. Their passing has been a source of interest to the troops, particularly as all the anti-aircraft machine guns have potted vigorously at them, giving the gunners excellent aiming practice. I don't know whether any have been hit yet. At any rate, roast goose has not appeared on the menu." This same officer recalled that a poetic soldier broke into verse thus in the course of his letter home :—

Twinkle, twinkle, little shell,
Come and blow the Turks to hell ;
There they'll see the devil stand
With a pitchfork in his hand.

- 4th The 1/4th Essex occupied the early days of September in establishing four posts and in improving and repairing the trenches in the right sub-sector. Officers' patrols were sent out to ascertain the position of the 162nd Brigade on the right and also to reconnoitre the front, whilst work was commenced upon a communication trench. On September 10th a machine gun of the 162nd Brigade opened fire and, thinking it was an enemy weapon, "B" Post replied, which started the whole line, and the troops stood to arms until the cause was ascertained. The Battalion pushed forward its right posts about 100 yards to straighten up the line with the 162nd Brigade on September 14th and then, on the 23rd, relief was effected by 1/5th Essex and 200 of the 1/8th Hants. Whilst resting working parties were detailed and one day there was a huge wash in which water was supplied in a wooden trough at the rate of six gallons per ninety men. Hostile aeroplane activity was noticed and some amount of enemy shelling was observed to fall on unoccupied ground near the beach. Heavy fire was heard from the Turkish trenches on September 27th, in the vicinity of Hill 60. Flares were

observed and bullets dropped in the 1/4th lines, but no injury resulted. The firing died away, but broke out again for a short time. The decrease in the strength of the Battalion from the date of landing (August 13th) to September 30th from all causes was 20 officers and 354 other ranks, of whom a few sick returned to duty. The strength of the Battalion at the latter date was nine officers and 337 other ranks. One officer and four other ranks, R.A.M.C., were attached. It was at the end of September that Lieut.-Colonel Edmund James Jameson, D.S.O., of the Leinster Regiment, took over command, an association which continued until he fell gallantly at the First Battle of Gaza in March, 1917. Early in October the rifles were overhauled and it was found that 35 per cent. of the extractors were out of order, being clogged with mud. Some form of canvas protection for the men not actually on duty in the trenches was needed, but nothing was procurable. Six officers of the 1/4th from England, together with one from the 12th Essex, joined the Battalion on October 7th, and next day a draft of two officers and 83 other ranks reported. They were fully equipped and clothed for a winter campaign, having been brought out on H.M.S. "Mars." From Gibraltar onwards they took their turn at stoking and trimming. It was upon this day also that the issue of winter khaki and underclothing was commenced, the drill khaki being withdrawn. The Battalion relieved the 1/5th Essex in the trenches on October 11th and "settling down" included the provision of ammunition receptacles (biscuit tins let into trench walls), curtains over bomb depots, home-made bomb lighters of pitch pine wrapped in khaki drill and saltpetre, and sentry group orders on boards at each post. With the cooler weather less sickness was reported, the average per day being between five and seven. Efforts were made to cope with the enemy snipers, three officers and three N.C.O.'s being charged with this duty. They did good work. Loopholes were changed and fresh sniping posts were made, in some cases by tunnelling under the parapet. "A" Squadron of Norfolk Yeomanry, recently arrived from England, were attached for instructional purposes on October 14th. An enemy machine gun firing from the south of Hill 60 did considerable damage to the sandbags of "C" Company's post at 550 yards range, killing one man. Two days later another enemy machine gun was observed firing from a position about 550 yards in front of "B" post. A party of Turks was reported to be approaching at 8 p.m. The Battalion stood to so smartly that all was in readiness in three minutes. An officers' patrol reported that the alarm was false and the stand-to was dismissed at 8.40 p.m. The machine gun detachment of the Norfolk Yeomanry were attached for duty and employed upon making machine gun emplacements. This caused some amount of long range sniping, the Turks enfilading a communication trench running along the rear of "C" post, for it was found that some of the Yeomanry had been making dug-outs in an exposed piece of ground at the rear of the trench

and planting bushes. The Turks evidently suspected that a gun position was being constructed, because the spot had been previously used as a thoroughfare without molestation. "C" Squadron of the Norfolk Yeomanry relieved "A" Squadron on October 18th and the next day the enemy shelled the Battalion line. They commenced on the extreme right and worked along the trench, bursting shrapnel over the parapet. Happily, no harm was done, although the fuses were well-timed. Later in the day there was another bombardment, probably in answer to the battalion snipers, who had been doing good work from well concealed positions. The Turks, who a week ago exposed themselves continually from the front trenches, were now very cautious. A short course of musketry was fired towards the end of October. Five rounds were expended by a few men each day through holes in the parapet. When the Norfolk Yeomanry left on October 21st the line held by the Battalion was shortened and a portion was taken over by the 1/5th Essex. There was a plucky incident on October 22nd. An officers' patrol, under 2nd Lieut. New, encountered a small party of Turks concealed in the bushes one hundred yards in front of No. 7 post and one man was mortally wounded. 2nd Lieut. Newman went out under heavy fire and succeeded in bringing the dying soldier into the trench upon his back, for which gallant action his name was brought to the notice of the Brigadier. There was a good deal of rain and difficulty was experienced in keeping the men dry. There was no roofing material, although corrugated iron and timber were expected. Two or three Turks approached close to the centre of the line and threw a bomb, but it failed to reach the trench. Lieut. John Morice Maitland Marshall died of wounds and was buried on October 23rd. At this date the effective strength of the Battalion was 18 officers and 337 other ranks. The unit had been in the trenches a fortnight and had lost 60 men sick. Dysentery was not so prevalent, but men suffered from internal troubles, from four to five being sent to hospital daily. None returned to the Battalion and it was difficult to man the posts owing to the shortness of men. Some had to do two nights' consecutive guard. An enemy working party was enfiladed by machine gun fire on October 25th at a new trench 1,400 yards in the rear of Hill 60. The habit of the Turks was to throw out patrols early in the morning to cover the working parties. Next day work was started on winter dug-outs. On the night of October 26th a patrol, under 2nd Lieut. Brian James Brett Walch, reached a point about 100 yards in front of No. 9 post, when the moon rose and disclosed them. A party of Turks approached, before whom the patrol retired, in the course of which the officer was mortally wounded. Upon October 27th the officer commanding remarked, "The Battalion is in the trenches three weeks or more at a time, but washing, hair-cutting, shaving, etc., are carried on as much as possible. Consider this very important; keeps men fitter and prevents slackness, which always seems to appear

when men get careless of appearances. The whole of the front of the position now clear of scrub, and have asked for wire to be put down." Simultaneous sniping was arranged from various posts and the firing was quite good, having an obvious effect upon the enemy's marksmen. The men were enthusiastic in their work, which maintained the standard of their shooting. At the end of October it was noted that the winter dug-outs were progressing slowly except that for the reserve company, which was finished. It was 30ft. long and 10ft. wide, allowing one yard per man, and resembled an open shed with its 6ft. of roofing, 1ft. for drain and 3ft for the pathway. On this day the Battalion completed three weeks in the trenches. Four officers and 83 other ranks was the loss for the month from sickness, with the exception of two officers killed and one officer and two other ranks wounded.

The weather was warm in the opening days of November, an unexpected change after the break of a fortnight before. Dysentery was still rife, though the weather was cool and more fresh meat and bread were available. In the opinion of Colonel Jameson, sufficient attention had not been given to the training of cooks before the Battalion left England. "With good cooks more could be made of the rations issued, especially rice and flour. They know little or nothing of the art of making a field kitchen or oven. The biscuits are good, but some of the bully beef is indifferent and there is no doubt it is the cause of indigestion and diarrhoea." Reliefs to night sentries were sanctioned, though the N.C.O. of the group was to remain awake. The winter dug-outs progressed slowly because of lack of men for digging. Little timber was available for overhead cover, and no iron. There was great joy, however, in the fact that the English mail was delivered in eighteen days, the shortest time so far. The commanding officer continued to manifest much interest in sniping. "The enemy do not show themselves at all," he wrote, "and seldom appear in their loopholes. They do not use the latter much to fire through, but through brushwood placed either over them or half-way between. Telescopes are absolutely necessary to locate them. The best glasses are of little use for this purpose. At least half a dozen telescopes are wanted in the Battalion and the same number of telescopic sighted rifles. We have one of the latter—I believe the only one in the brigade. Two officers of the Suffolk Yeomanry, a regiment recently arrived from England, were shown round on December 3rd and I think they were impressed by our observation and sniping posts, specially made and concealed from enemy view. Little or no observation or sniping can be done from the parapets. The best form of sniping post has been made by tunnelling under the parapet and coming out some 12ft. or 18ft. on the forward slope. Sniping has been kept up continually from these posts during the last month without the enemy in any instance locating the post. Whilst the sniping points are being used a few shots should be fired from neighbouring loopholes

to divert attention. There are precautions to be observed, however, such as watering the ground in front of loopholes of sniping posts overnight, not firing while the sun is on the loophole, keeping holes stopped up with fresh brushwood when not in use. The work should only be done by selected officers and men. The result has been that several of the enemy last month were shot in the open and several must have been hit looking through the loopholes, judging by the way in which nearly all of them have been closed up, with an almost total absence of sniping on their part. A fixed rifle in position for night firing was spotted by an enemy sniper and the front shield was hit several times, but not pierced. These rifles require careful concealment, for placing them in a parapet of sandbags is not sufficient safeguard." There was some excitement on the night of November 5th, on the right of the Australian line at Anzac, where the Turks attempted to destroy the trenches which had been advanced by means of sapping, but they were repulsed with loss. An officers' listening patrol was sent out on November 6th on the left of the line to deal with an enemy patrol which had been coming at night close up to No. 10 post, possibly suspicious of the 18-pounder gun which had been placed nearby in an underground emplacement. It was, however, removed six weeks later without a round being fired. Colonel Jameson, when listening at the end of a blind sap, saw a Turkish watchdog only a few feet away and from the way in which it moved formed the opinion that it was trained to act in conjunction with a patrol. Several of these dogs, which were large black and white animals, were employed in this work. During the daytime they could be seen behind the enemy's line. The Battalion was relieved by the 1/8th Hants on November 6th and went to a gully close to battalion headquarters. A draft of an officer and 15 other ranks joined from England, but the Battalion had been so reduced by recurrent sickness, which took the form of fever with high temperature, that it was under 300 strong and, therefore, reverted to an establishment of two companies only, viz., "A" (Lieut. Donner) and "B" (Lieut. Lockwood). The weather kept fine, which was a decided advantage, as there was little or no shelter. No roofing material was available and it was impossible to undercut the sides of the gully owing to the nature of the soil. A more liberal issue of soap and a sufficient quantity of water enabled the Battalion to have a big wash. Over 230 N.C.O.'s and men were required for guards, working parties, etc., which prevented the Battalion from getting its nine days' rest after a month in the trenches. At dawn on November 15th the 1/5th Essex were relieved, the Battalion going in with a strength of 17 officers and 285 other ranks and taking over No. 9 to 13 posts inclusive. Posts Nos. 1 to 8 were held by the 1/8th Hants, Colonel Jameson commanding the whole line, Posts 1 to 13. Enemy shelling on a tunnel leading from the 6th Essex lines caused some casualties to fatigue parties before it was deepened. Work was interfered

with by a dust storm on November 17th. Advantage of the wind was taken to light brushwood and scrub in front of No. 10 post by throwing over a sack packed with inflammable material soaked with paraffin and weighted with stones. The scrub caught fire, but it was put out by the heavy rain which came on shortly afterwards and during which the Turks opened rifle fire. Incendiary bombs were of no use for the purpose of firing the brushwood. Notwithstanding the small quantity of wood and iron available, work was continued on the winter dug-outs, but the earth constantly caved in, for there was no revetting material to keep it in position. The divisional general was also anxious that caves should be utilized as protection from the enemy's artillery, which it was thought would increase in power later. On November 23rd the Battalion took over five more posts on the left of the line, Carisbrooke post, New Cut and Nos. 1, 2 and 3, there being three machine guns in Carisbrooke. Dysentery was abating, but the cooler weather brought rheumatism, chills and similar complaints. The Battalion strength was returned at 288 other ranks. Firing at short range by small guns, probably mountain guns, was noted, though the Turks were very quiet and they could not be aroused even by sniping. There was a thunderstorm and heavy rain on the night of November 26th-27th. The following morning the New Zealand Mounted Rifles took over the line and the Battalion rested in Romford Road Gully during the day, during which there was steady rain. Orders came in the evening to march to Anzac for embarkation with the Division, but they were cancelled owing to the rough sea. The night was spent in a gully, but the conditions were most unpleasant. The men were already wet through and the cold night and a fall of snow caused keen suffering. There were a few cases of frost bite. During the whole of November 28th the Battalion bivouacked on the snow-covered ground. The next day the Brigade contrived to get what shelter it could in Taylor's Gully, near Anzac, in the dug-outs vacated by the New Zealanders, but conditions were little improved, as all the timber and roofing iron had been removed. On December 1st the 161st moved into Waterfall Gully to make room for the 163rd Brigade, and an end came to the sojourn on the Peninsula on the 3rd, when the troops embarked at 11 p.m. and arrived at Mudros at 9 o'clock the next morning. All ranks were much exhausted, some of the men having been without rations since the previous night. The camp was very cramped and there was a shortage of water. Many suffered severely from the hardships of the last days on Anzac and their difficulties were enhanced by the absence of foodstuffs, except that which could be purchased at high prices from the Greeks. On December 13th the 1/4th, 14 officers and 252 other ranks, embarked at West Mudros, with 90 men of the 1/5th Essex, on the "Marathon," which later took the remainder of the Brigade and headquarters. The weather was fine, the men well fed and the voyage proved

an agreeable change. Upon arrival at Alexandria at 1.30 p.m. on December 16th camp equipment was drawn and next day the Brigade landed and marched to the camp at Mex, four miles west of Alexandria. Divisional headquarters and the 162nd and 163rd Brigades were encamped on the eastern side of the city.

5th The 1/5th Essex on September 1st took over 600 yards of the front line trenches on the right of Hill 60 from the 15th and 16th Australians, who left a large number of officers and men to give instruction in trench warfare, at which the Anzacs were adepts. The trench, which was at some points within sixty yards of the enemy, was in an unfinished state, although much had been accomplished since it was captured. "As we marched up," wrote an officer, "we passed a small body of Anzacs in a gully. One of them said to one of my platoon sergeants, 'Seen an Australian Division about anywhere? I mean about 85 men.' It was an exaggeration, of course, but so heavy had been the casualties that this was the way in which divisions were being spoken of." Enemy snipers were active during the day and this was only countered by accurate fire from the Battalion sharpshooters, because any relaxation of vigilance resulted in increased enemy marksmanship. Periscopes were found to be indispensable, also periscopic rifles, of which the Australians had a supply. The enemy kept up a heavy fire at night, as if to ward off an attack, but no reply was made. There was some bombing, but it was ineffective because the trenches were too far apart. Enfilade shrapnel fire was also experienced, but casualties were slight because of the flat trajectory and the cover which the dug-outs afforded. There was more activity on the left of Hill 60, where the combatants were somewhat intermixed owing to the enemy holding portions of the same trench. Upon relief by the 4th Norfolks on September 5th, the Battalion encamped in a gully near Brigade headquarters in Australia Valley. It was a real relief, inasmuch as although it was known that fatigues and digging would have to be done, there was more room to move, the ground was cleaner, there were fewer flies and no permeating smell from dead bodies. Sickness, as in every other unit in that area, was weakening the men. On September 12th there was a move to a new "rest" area close by, named Hatfield Park. It was not very far from the front line, but it was fairly well sheltered from fire. The effective strength of the Battalion on September 18th was eleven officers and 281 other ranks. The Turks opened rapid rifle fire along the front, the shelling of their trenches having led to an anticipation of an attack. Little damage resulted, for the enemy fired high, in many cases simply placing their rifles and letting off without aim. On the night of September 22nd Captain Deakin (Adjutant), Captain Colvin ("C" Company) and Captain Finn ("B" Company) inspected the section of line to be taken over from the 1/4th and there met at headquarters Lieut.-Colonel Rimington Taylor and the Adjutant (Captain Cooper). Both

were quite well and the Adjutant was particularly cheerful concerning the excellent sniping he had had. The sub-sector was opposite Hill 100 and the chief feature of it became known as Laidon Hill, Battalion headquarters being on the reverse slope. Two companies of the 1/8th Hants were attached to make up the necessary strength. The 8th Hants held the left of the line, then came "A" Company (Captain Mackenzie Taylor), "B" Company (Captain J. F. Finn), "C" Company (Captain Colvin) and "D" Company (Captain Mavor). "A" and "B" Companies held Laidon Hill. The trenches were along the crest, with several forward saps, while on the reverse slope were Battalion and "B" Company headquarters and the men's dug-outs. "The entrant of the Dere on our right (Warley Gap)," wrote Colonel Gibbons, "was a difficult position, completely commanded by a spur of Chunuk Bair which the enemy had fortified by a double tier of trenches. On its farther side we joined up with the 162nd Brigade; if we could be said to 'join up' when the right post was separated from their left by about 200 feet of inaccessible rock. However, we made a small post some way up the side, which gave an excellent view and provided a good nest for our snipers. The rear side of the Dere was not so steep, and a trench was made with difficulty down its slope and slightly 'refused,' which effectually covered the entrant, while the bed of the stream, now dry, was closed by a barbed wire entanglement and a short trench. . . There was a false crest in front of the centre of our line which hid the bottom of Kaiajik from view and we started on forward saps with a view to advancing our line to it." This tour of duty was a busy time for the much reduced Battalion. Owing to the nearness of the enemy and the fact that the front line trenches were all that existed (no second line or support trenches as in France) great vigilance was needed. Much needed to be done to improve the system. Forward saps were dug and a tunnel commenced in front of Laidon Hills for the purpose of giving command of dead ground. As the view of the sentries was obstructed by scrub at night, parties went "over the top" for the purpose of cutting it. Being noisy work, it attracted a good deal of enemy fire, but the men stuck to their task well. Daily incidents were noted, such as the burst of high explosives upon the enemy trenches on the slopes of Chunuk Bair, stiff bomb fighting on Hill 60, and the answer to the fire of a 7.5 gun by a 6-inch howitzer, which struck the trenches on Hill 100 with twelve rounds. On the other hand, the Battalion snipers were temporarily shelled out of their position on the right of the support line. The enemy signaled the advent of October by the erection of barbed wire near Hill 100. Two officers joined for duty October 2nd and work was continued on the saps and tunnel which it was hoped would give command of the dead ground at the bottom of Kaiajik Dere. Laidon Hill, which had been heavily shelled by the 7.5 gun on September 29th, was similarly treated on October 3rd. Many of the shells

struck the opposite slope of the Dere in which the troops were living, but exploded without doing damage. Others, however, partially destroyed the parapet. "A" Company's headquarters, solidly built of sandbags, received several direct hits and Lieut. Chester, who was in command, was considerably annoyed at the loss of several articles from a parcel of provisions received from home only that morning. Posts from England were very irregular, but immensely welcomed. There seemed, however, to be a good deal of ignorance in the homeland concerning the conditions under which the troops were living. "I heard," wrote an officer, "one man reading a letter which had come from a girl in Essex. It ran: 'Dear Will.—Will you have your photo took and send it to me like George did in France?' It was amusing to think of having a photograph taken, developed and printed on Gallipoli. There were no rest billets, no amusements, no canteens, no ships and no leave—to mention a few things which troops in France and elsewhere enjoyed at times." The supply of water improved and rations were somewhat better, though still lacking in variety. The Quartermaster (Lieut. Nobbs) did his utmost in this respect. When driving through Alexandria as the Battalion was going out in August, one officer noticed a branch of Lipton's. So at the end of September, he took the risk and sent a letter with the short address, "Lipton's, Ltd., Alexandria," with a cheque asking them to send him tinned fruit, fish, biscuits and chocolate to its value. This consignment, to his great pleasure, came along safely during October. On October 7th eight officers joined from England, two from the 1/5th, three from 2/5th and three from the 12th. Their arrival cheered everyone up, though they made the "old timers" feel very shabby. Clean, smart, well-dressed and healthy, they were as a breath of fresh air; besides they had much to tell about home, about the war and even about the Gallipoli campaign of which those at Anzac had not heard. Work was not so hard upon the officers from this date, but reinforcements of N.C.O.'s and men were sorely needed. Of the officers who then joined, four were destined not to survive the campaign—Beard and Maxwell Browne were killed in the first battle of Gaza, Gray died of enteric in the summer of 1917, and Compton, who left the Battalion in Egypt in 1916, was afterwards killed in France. Reminders of approaching winter came in a violent storm on October 8th. An enemy aeroplane, with two observers, flew low over the line the next day and on the 10th the enemy sniping increased in violence, being concentrated upon the iron loophole plates. These made a break in the continuity of the parapet and were thus rendered easily distinguishable. The snipers' positions were difficult to locate owing to the absence of dust. The enemy was also active in his trenches, digging, sawing and hammering. Upon relief at dawn on October 14th, the Battalion returned to Hatfield Park, near the Brigade headquarters, though the rain which fell in the

afternoon showed the necessity for preparing for the rainy season. A good deal of work was done in levelling stretches of ground high above the bed of the gully, which could be tenanted in case of flood, and men were made to move from many of the low-lying dug-outs. Bathing was much enjoyed, but the danger from enemy fire was emphasized by the death of Sergeant R. W. Miller, who was killed when walking out of the sea. As a variation to aiming at one another, both sides fired with their rifles at the flocks of geese and storks which were flying west, but without apparent result. On October 18th four officers joined from the 2/5th, of whom Lieut. Capron was later to become adjutant of the Battalion and to fall in the van at the first Battle of Gaza. Two posts were taken over from the 1/4th Essex on October 21st and Nos. 1 to 5 inclusive to Carisbrooke Post from 1/8th Hants. There were brilliant moonlit nights about this time and it was possible to stop effectively the enemy repair of trenches. The explosion of a mine occurred on October 28th, on the east side of Hill 60, by which the Turkish bombing chamber appeared to be destroyed. The strength of the Battalion at the end of October was 21 officers and 191 other ranks. The practice in the Battalion was to work in pairs at sniping, the marksman with his rifle and an observer with his telescope. As soon as a face was seen at the loophole in the sandbag parapet the word would be given to fire. The Turks had the same habit and there were on occasion some exciting experiences. "Some people," wrote Colonel Gibbons, "have doubted the possibility of watching a man fire at you and 'bobbing' in time, but at 500 yards it takes the bullet more than three-quarters of a second to reach you, whereas the 'bobbing' can be almost simultaneous with the discharge." The Colonel shared his work mainly with Lieut. Womersley or R.S.M. Fry. Another contrivance was the "Wallaby" rifle. It was placed in a holder and could be trained in any direction. The sights were aligned on the enemy and observation was then made with the telescope, it being possible to pull the trigger without taking the eye from the glass. The defect was that in daylight it could only be fired from one place and it was more effective at night. Fighting in the neighbourhood of Lone Pine caused the Battalion to stand to, but all remained quiet elsewhere. Carisbrooke Post and posts 1 to 5 on left of the tunnel were handed over to 1/6th Essex at stand-to on November 6th and the Battalion took over posts 9 to 11 on the right flank from the 1/4th Essex, who were relieved of the remainder of their charge by the 1/8th Hants. The new portion of the line included the "Lion's Den," a tunnel wherein an 18-pounder gun had been placed with much labour and secrecy to serve in the projected attack on Hill 60, but it was never used. A fresh enemy sniper was spotted lying in advance of the wire on Hill 100 on November 7th, thus commanding the dead ground, and the next day Captain Conway and Lieut. Capron left the sap to the right of No. 10 post to obtain information as to the movements of an enemy patrol which had

caused loss to the Hampshires the night before. They reported the patrol was lying under cover of thick scrub at the top of the ridge where it ran steeply down to the Kaiajik Dere, this point being only thirty yards from the British line. A bomb was thrown at the point from a sap to the right of No. 10 post, followed by a flare. Fire from posts 7, 8 and 9 was directed on to the same position. The enemy retaliated by opening upon posts 7 to 10 for half an hour, with ineffective bomb throwing and occasional bursts of machine gunfire. A catapult bomb-thrower was brought up during the afternoon of November 9th and fired from No. 6 post at the forward enemy sniping point discovered two days before. Eight missiles were despatched with apparent success at a range of one hundred yards. On November 10th the advanced loophole was again the subject of attention and two bombs from the catapult caused the sniping activity there to cease. This weapon proved a great source of interest to the general staff and the brigade major, Major Fergus, became an adept manipulator of it. A Turkish deserter surrendered on November 11th, having crawled into the line near the Lion's Den. He was clothed in winter uniform, with thick great coat. He confirmed the existence of the new sap in advance of Hill 100 and also stated that his regiment had twelve machine guns mounted, with more in reserve. There were no fixed patrols, but sixty men per company were placed nightly thirty yards in front of the trenches. Gas attacks were feared and on November 18th biscuit tins were placed in the trenches to serve as gongs to give warning should necessity arise. The Battalion was relieved at stand-to on November 15th, after a month's tour, by 1/4th Essex, and proceeded to Inglenook Gully in brigade reserve, but by the 23rd they were again in the front line, occupying posts 4 to 11 inclusive, with dug-outs in West Ham (north). Owing to lack of men most of the personnel was continuously in the trenches. Any spare time was occupied in digging, so that dug-outs could be constructed when iron and timber arrived. On November 26th welcome orders came for the Division to move to Mudros and then, as if enraged thereat, a thunderstorm broke and heavy rain fell for five hours. The trenches were flooded, the men being up to their knees and thighs in places. During the downpour the baggage had to be packed and everyone was soaked. Work went blithely on, however, and when on the eve of the 27th the 1/5th were relieved by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles they moved into West Ham Gully south and bivouacked in the open in dull and rainy weather. At 4 p.m. the Battalion marched to the beach to embark, only to be sent back because the order was cancelled. During the night they slept as best they could in the open, huddled in groups for warmth, for the rain had turned to persistent sleet and snow. There was no shelter of any kind and the cold wind added to the misery of the last hours on the Peninsula. The gale continued on November 28th, with a sharp frost. Some shelter was secured by digging

in and a large fire made the conditions more comfortable. Notwithstanding the exposure very few reported sick. The Battalion moved into Taylor's Gully on November 29th, where dug-outs were used, being the first time for four nights that the men had had cover. A portion of the daylight hours was spent in close order drill. Soon after noon next day there was another move to Waterfall Gully, where the dug-outs were not so good and there was constant dropping of spent bullets, which wounded the Adjutant (Lieut. Womersley), among others, and Lieut. Capron became acting Adjutant in his place. After much uncertainty and the moving of baggage to and from Anzac definite embarkation orders were received on December 3rd. At 12 o'clock on a dark but calm night, with incessant fire from the front line as a lullaby, the bulk of the 161st Brigade embarked on the s.s. "Ermine" and remained off Anzac during the night. "The terraces of Anzac twinkled with lights," wrote Colonel Gibbons, "and it might have been Torquay or Ventnor at a distance." The strength of the Battalion was then thirteen officers and 141 other ranks, of whom six officers and 100 other ranks had served throughout the whole seventeen weeks. Twenty-seven had been killed, ten died of disease and 133 were wounded. At 6 a.m. on December 4th the steamship set off for Mudros, which was reached at noon, and the Battalion marched to Portinos Camp. The accommodation was very cramped, 15 men being apportioned to a bell tent. Water supply was scarce and was limited to a gallon per man daily. On December 6th the Battalion mascot, Jack, was brought into camp and again put on the strength. The supply of goods was in the hands of the Greeks, who charged high prices, but in the warmer weather and greater freedom of movement the Battalion quickly improved in health, concerts, football and donkey riding being among the spare time recreations. Colonel Gibbons relates that he had the luxury of a hot bath at some natural hot springs, called "Therma," and that they often walked out of their way to visit the nursing sisters at the hospital, so pleased were they to see an English woman again. The first draft joined the Battalion from the 8/5th Essex—three officers and 45 N.C.O.'s and men. Then on December 13th the 1/5th embarked on the "Marathon" for Alexandria, off which they arrived on December 16th and stayed all night. At 1.45 p.m. on December 17th the Battalion landed with the Brigade and marched, in hot weather, but with a comfortable breeze, to Mex Camp, where they slept ten men in a tent.

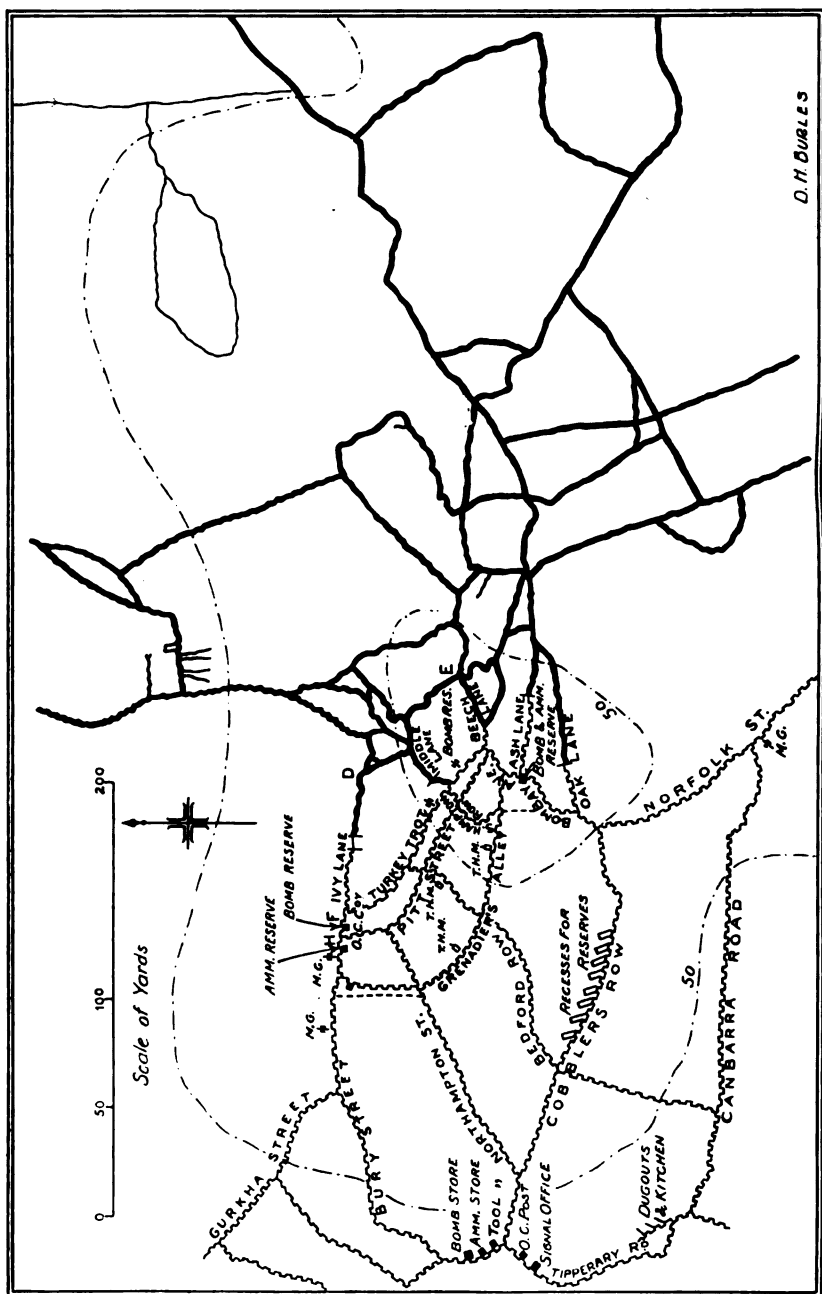
6th The 1/6th Essex, who had relieved the 13th Australians, were in line with the 1/4th Essex and drove a tunnel at night time to connect with that Battalion. The enemy were also active in their digging, but except for occasional bomb throwing and shellfire, the War Diary for September tells little. There were five killed during the month and 12 wounded, whilst the sick totalled 140. The Battalion was relieved on October 4th and on the 7th a draft of 95 other ranks arrived. Major W. J. Bowker,

D.S.O., of the Somersetshire Light Infantry, took over command of the Battalion on October 8th and commenced a long and honourable association which did not terminate until he left to assume command of the 231st Brigade in Palestine in May, 1917. The 1/6th returned to the trenches on October 11th. For a short time they were with the 163rd Brigade, for trench work, in relief of the 4th Norfolks. Expectation ran high that the enemy would attempt an active enterprise at the Feast of Bairam and great watchfulness was exercised. On October 18th a Turkish machine gun enfiladed a communication trench, and was at first thought to be a British gun. Bombs were also thrown from a point opposite No. 3 post. The enemy had dug a sap within 35 yards, under cover of heavy beams, from which they could bomb the opposite trenches. The Brigade bombing officer brought round the catapult gun and successfully drew the fire of the Turks. The enemy resumed their fire with their bombing machine next day, when a private was killed and two others wounded. For a time the situation in this quarter required skilful handling and Private Brown acted with such coolness that he was complimented next day by the Brigadier-General. The Welsh Horse later did some excellent digging at No. 3 Post. The men were noted on October 21st to be rather sickly and listless with diarrhoea. The Turks at this time would fire nightly for five or six minutes from their trenches, which were 200 to 250 yards away, and then sniping and bomb-throwing would follow. The latter also occurred on both sides during the daytime. The Turkish snipers were good shots and exposure on the parapet meant an instant casualty. The Battalion was relieved by the Norfolk Yeomanry on October 22nd and returned to Inglenook, Australia Valley, until it took over from the 1/8th Hants at Culver trench on October 28th, on the left section of the 161st Brigade. The reserve sheltered in three gullies which led to Australia Valley, viz., West Ham South and North, and Upton Park. The casualties for the month were four killed, 16 wounded, one missing and 263 to hospital, a total of 284. Nineteen officers arrived for duty during the month. One of them recalls that his first night in the trenches was rather exciting for a novice. Captain Tee was detailed to build an iron loophole into the parapet along with himself and two or three others. They had been at work about fifteen minutes when Tee was hit by a sniper's bullet, which entered his left side quite near the heart. He jumped into the trench and hurried to the R.A.M.C. aid post. When he was looked up next morning, he was found to be enjoying a breakfast of bread and jam as pleased as Punch at his escape. The bullet had been deflected by a steel mirror and Testament which he carried in his pocket. The mail was very irregular, but when it did arrive it was generally very large, though many of the parcels were in a dilapidated condition, due to insecure packing. Mail day, however, had an enlivening effect upon the troops that nothing else could do. Sickness was still reported to be very prevalent

in November, chiefly internal complaints, although the food was stated to be plentiful and excellent. The duty was strenuous, consisting of trench work, with sentry reliefs and improvement of firing points sited in clay or sandy soil, tasks which were of three hours' duration. There were also long fatigues for the transport of food and water. The practice was recommenced on November 4th of firing five rounds per man or as much ammunition as possible. The Battalion took over additional posts from the 1/5th Essex (Carisbrooke to group 5 inclusive) on November 6th and the next day 2nd Lieut. Cecil Arthur Rayner was mortally wounded by a rifle bullet in the neck. He had heard the Turks whilst on patrol and put his head over the parapet at dawn to see if he could observe them. An enemy patrol was also heard going along a gully bottom opposite No. 21 post on November 10th. The weather was good, with occasional showers, but cold at night. Early on the morning of November 19th Turks were reported to be filing down their slope into the valley. The Adjutant (Captain George Archibald Percy Douglas, 1/10th Londons) was sent down to the trench line with reinforcement. He got out of the trenches to better observe what was happening and was immediately shot in the body, from the effects of which he died some days later. A private was also hit through the head and killed whilst on sentry duty at Group 4, but the two incidents were not connected. The right half of the Battalion went to rest at Inglenook on November 22nd, though the next day two officers and 30 rank and file were sent up as permanent support to Jameson's Jaunt. Then on November 27th came orders for Mudros and the Battalion marched off at 5 a.m., slipping and sliding for half a mile to the beach through clay and snow. The embarkation order was cancelled and the men had to return, so fatigued that in many cases they slept where they fell in the snow. The next night was cold and spent in the open, though the Battalion stood the weather well on the whole. It waited with the other units of the Brigade for several hours, finally having to spend another night at Inglenook. There was a move to dug-outs in Waterloo Gully on November 29th, with the cold weather continuing. It had one merit, that of banishing the fly pest. The men were, however, much bespattered with mud from head to foot. The casualties for the last month on the Peninsula were: Killed, 1; wounded, 7; missing, 1; sick to hospital, 123—a total of 132. Quite a large percentage of men were found to be suffering from trench feet and the effects of the damp, cold weather. On December 22nd 25 men were admitted to hospital. After another postponement the Battalion went safely aboard the ex-cattle boat "Ermine" at midnight on December 3rd, leaving Anzac at 7 a.m. on the 21st and landing at Mudros at 1.30 p.m. for Portinos Camp. One N.C.O. remembers the great excitement of all ranks upon seeing chocolate paper strewn around. Upon the march up several men fell



GALLIPOLI: Walker's Ridge, Anzac.



out from weakness. A draft of one officer and 28 other ranks reported. Cleaning and refitting proceeded vigorously, varied by route marching. The Battalion was troubled with many cases of skin disease, but otherwise the change was beneficial and the health of men gradually improved. The Battalion embarked at 12.30 a.m. on December 13th, in the "Marathon," under Captain D. H. Rose, leaving Mudros at 4 p.m. Alexandria was reached at 1 p.m. on the 16th and the next day the 1/6th marched to Mex Camp, where a few days later Major C. R. Roberts West took over temporary command, Colonel Bowker having gone to hospital.

WITH THE 7th ESSEX ON HILL 60.

7th The 1/7th Essex left Lala Baba at 7.30 p.m. on August 31st and marched to a gully in rear of the 4th Australian Brigade at Anzac. That afternoon a British aeroplane had come down on Salt Lake and the Turks had shelled it hard, setting fire to the gorse around it. The Battalion went practically right through the burning vegetation and arrived in a gully near the Aglyl Dere about 1 a.m., all ranks very tired. "A" and "B" Companies were attached to the Australians on September 3rd. The former Company were stationed near Table Top and "B" Company was with the 13th Australians on Rhododendron Spur. "The Australians made us very welcome," wrote an officer. "One could not help noticing how much more used than our fellows they were to looking after themselves. Parties of them would go off and see to things without being told to do so by officers or N.C.O.'s. I remember one little group of Australian Tommies becoming 'fed up' with having to go right away down to the bottom of a steep hill for water, so off they went and found a large galvanized iron water tank about 6ft. high and 3ft. in circumference, with a tap at the bottom. With much sweating they carried this tank up to the top of the hill just by their dug-outs. They then proceeded to make a number of journeys up and down the hill until they had got this tank full of water. Although this task occupied some hours of strenuous work, yet when they had finished their water supply was at their doorstep, as it were, and they were satisfied." The country was rough and hilly. The trenches were deep and periscopes were in constant use. No one dared to put his head over the top, as the Turkish snipers were very watchful. The rest of the Battalion found working parties to dig a communication sap between the 54th Division headquarters and those of the Indian Brigade. The 7th concentrated at the Gully on September 10th and three days later were transferred temporarily to the 163rd Brigade in exchange for the 8th Hampshires, who were very weak in strength. The Essex Battalion was the strongest unit in the Brigade and thereafter, with the 5th Suffolks and 4th Northants (who had been exchanged from the 162nd Brigade with the 5th Norfolks) was entrusted with the defence of Hill 60—a privilege

of which the Battalion was very proud. Several tales are told of this tour of duty. It was said that a certain man was detailed one morning for "look out" in the front line on Hill 60. Several bombs came over and burst and yet the look out man took no notice. Presently a bomb came over and burst just on the parapet of the trench, only a yard or two from the man, fortunately without doing damage. The irate platoon sergeant went up and wanted to know why the look-out man did not give warning, to receive the astonishing reply, "What bomb, sergeant?" The man was deaf! On another occasion the Brigadier came round and asked a man on sentry duty in the front line what he was supposed to be doing. His relief was lying asleep on the fire step a yard or two away. The sentry replied that he was taking it in turns with his relief man to "have a rest!"

"Hill 60," wrote Lieut. Clive Needell, "was notoriously one of the most unpleasant spots on the peninsula. The Anzacs had captured one half of the Turkish trench system on the hill, the other half remaining in enemy hands. The communication trenches joining our section to that held by the Turks were consequently barricaded and as only seventeen yards separated our front line from that of the Turks, bombing was practically continuous. At that time the bombs, commonly called jam tin bombs, were not nearly so effective as the later types of Mills' bomb, but, none the less, they had to be treated with respect. No one in the front line could rest, as everyone had to be ready at any moment to dodge them. The procedure to localize the effect of bombs dropping in the trench and so to reduce casualties was as follows: In each fire bay there was a man on constant watch for bombs and he held a blanket. When he saw one coming over which he thought was likely to fall into the trench, he would shout 'Bomb right' or 'Bomb left,' as the case might be. Everybody in that fire bay, except the look-out man, would scuttle round the next traverse. If the bomb fell into the trench the look-out man would drop the blanket over the bomb and dodge round the nearest traverse. The bomb usually exploded harmlessly, except that it did not do the blanket much good! Considering the constant bombing that went on it was surprising how few casualties resulted from it. The bombs used by the Turks were not very reliable and the fuses often went out; consequently, for a time, our fellows rather enjoyed the joke of relighting the fuse of a Turkish bomb which had gone out and flinging it back again. This idea did not appeal to the Turkish sense of humour, so he thought of the bright idea of fitting an instantaneous fuse to bombs and flinging them over unlighted in the hope that our fellows would light them and so blow themselves up. Fortunately this was spotted and strict orders were issued that no enemy bombs were to be lighted. Owing to the heavy fighting which had taken place on Hill 60, the dead, both Australian and Turkish, lay thick all around and because of the close proximity of the lines neither side could get the

bodies buried. The stench and the flies and the heat during the day consequently made life on Hill 60 very unpleasant apart from any fighting. The front line at Hill 60 was also a favourite target for whizz-bangs. Both sides had started mining the opposing front lines and the Welsh miners who were busy digging our galleries under the Turks toiled like niggers. It was work in a very cramped space and must have been terribly fatiguing. It was distinctly unpleasant hearing the Turks mining underneath and wondering when they were going to blow it up. It was decided, in order to prevent the Turks from establishing a bombing post too near our front line, to push forward one of the barricades which blocked the communication trench joining the two front lines. Midnight on Thursday, the 16th September, was fixed for this operation. While a party of men under Lieut. E. Whur pulled down the barricade and re-erected it nearer the Turkish line, the Turks were kept from interfering by concentrated bombing on the points of the enemy line nearest to the barricade. The affair was perfectly successful and Lieut. Whur received the M.C. for his part of the operation. No casualties were suffered, which was really remarkable, as the whole show lasted about an hour and the Turks did not take it quietly. Two machine guns were posted right in the front line and when the Battalion took over the Hill, our guns had to be mounted in these positions, but it was obvious that it was unsound to have machine guns in position right in the front line within twenty yards of the Turks. Consequently, much better situations were selected farther back and to the right, from which fire could be brought to bear at once should the Turks attack the Hill. The machine guns were shifted to the new position on the 25th September. The weather at this time began to get distinctly cool at nights and everyone was more or less on the sick list, with jaundice, dysentery, enteritis, sores, etc. It was pitiful to see fellows who really ought to have been in hospital insisting on carrying on, although as weak as rats and practically unable to take any food except tinned milk and cornflour, a limited supply of which was kept by medical officers as medical comforts and doled out sparingly as required. Rumours, of course, were rife. Almost every day some rumour was circulated that the Division was shifting to Helles or Imbros or Mudros and so on. One bright young officer, just out, came up with the information that, without doubt, the Division was off to Greece, for he had seen stacked on the beach some boxes marked 'Dados, 54th Division.' 'Dados, of course, stands for Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services.' Major F. R. Waller recalls that the Essex, with the Northants and Suffolks, occupied the trenches turn and turn about. "The tours were reasonably short, but seeing that at night only a third of the garrison was allowed to rest at a time, and as, owing to the heat and flies, it was impossible to sleep during the day time, it is quite understandable that even the three days on the Hill seemed much longer than the double

ration in the gullies behind. No fires were allowed on the Hill and food had to be cooked well to the rear and man-handled up. Battalion strength became low, but the work required did not reduce in the same proportion. Double sentries were absolutely essential, so that they could keep each other awake, and the officers on duty, one to each sector, made certain that they both didn't nod at the same moment. Colonel Flick went sick and Major Kemball again became commanding officer. One could not wish for a better on service—always cheerful, always considerate, never flurried and popular with all. I never saw him cross except once and that was in front of Salt Lake when told by the Colonel of another Battalion that he was to retire. Needless to say, we didn't and his reply, well-known to the Battalion, had, perhaps, better not be written here. It was at this time that the Turks managed to get guns to bear on Hill 60 and, on the other hand, British 18-pounders and 'Hows' began to range on the Turkish trenches. Just once or twice we got them going all at once, which gave us some idea of what the fellows in France were quite used to by this time. The appearance of the dug-out of the O.C. left sector after a shell had gone through the roof and into the middle without exploding, killing the telephone operator in passing, gave many a very healthy respect for artillery and a yearning for more substantial cover, which almost overcame the general lack of energy." During practically the whole of the period on Gallipoli, only one form of jam was issued—apricot. "Possibly the reason for this," wrote an officer, "was to enable the flies, which immediately settled on anything sweet or damp, to be easily seen and, therefore, not swallowed with the food. The flies were so bad that they had to be continually fanned off the food held in one hand by the energetic use of the other. Anyhow, to return to apricot jam. A certain officer had written home for articles of food and in due course received a parcel, or, at least, the Battalion postman brought along a whole postbag to the officer in question and told him there was a parcel for him inside. When the officer looked into the postbag he saw a number of tins in the bottom—the parcel had broken open—mixed up with paper and string. 'Jam,' said the officer. 'Here's a change from apricot!' When he turned out the tins he found them to contain the eternal apricot!"

On October 4th the Battalion assiduously practised forming up with the object of making an assault upon the Turkish line lying immediately to their front, and when the Battalion relieved the 4th Northants the same night, it was reported by the latter that the garrisons of the listening posts could hear constant digging, but they were unable to determine whether it was mining. An Australian officer was detailed to settle the point and decided that the Turks were mining, but were at least twenty yards away, so that there was no immediate danger. Lieut. Pelly, who was Battalion intelligence officer, was killed on October 9th whilst on duty in the sector held by the 5th

Essex, and on October 18th the Battalion sustained another heavy loss, for the Medical Officer, Captain Graham, was killed by a shell which burst in his dug-out. During the month of October the weather got steadily worse. On October 8th it rained the whole night and turned the Gallipoli soil, which, when dry, is as hard as a rock, into a stiff glue. This stuck to the boots and made walking hard labour. The nights also became very cold. During this period the fighting was fairly quiet, except for occasional shelling and sniping. The usual bombing strafes, however, continued on Hill 60, so that the troops on duty were fully employed.

The Northants relieved the 7th Essex on October 10th, upon which day the Turks exploded a mine between Beech and Middle Lanes, about fifteen yards in front of their own trenches. No damage was done to the British front and the counter-mining continued vigorously. It was conjectured that the enemy had made a miscalculation, intending to blow in the right-hand mine shaft, which was considerably deeper than their own. This enemy activity caused a party of Welsh Horse to be detailed for mining operations on Hill 60, under R.E. supervision. The 7th Essex relieved the 5th Suffolks on October 20th and two days later, the enemy having sapped close up to the British right mine, it was decided to blow the shaft in. This task was successfully accomplished at 11.30 on October 22nd. Daylight could be seen where the explosion had taken place, although the British galleries were untouched. The Turks promptly placed a barricade across their end of the shaft and the 7th Essex did the same in their gallery. The Northants relieved the Essex on October 25th, the same day that Major C. R. Roberts West, adjutant, was sent temporarily to command the 4th Norfolks, and Captain Eve occupied the former position until the return from the Division of Captain Stubbings on November 1st. He had been acting as A.P.M. During this month (19th) the first draft arrived from England of five officers and then another of four officers and 80 other ranks. The enemy did not relax mining and, as a retort, an advanced sap of theirs was blown up on October 28th. Three days later the Turks blew up part of our front line. Curiously enough, barely two hours before this mine went up, the Corps Commander, General Godley, Divisional Commander, General Inglefield, Brigade Commander, General Ward, C.R.A., and staffs, with Major Kemball, had been on this exact spot and the last-named warned them that it was not safe. It was fortunate that this party was not there two hours later!

Adventures among the mines during October are related by Major Waller. "The Welsh miners' tales of hearing the Turks counter-mining were not very cheerful news. Still, they informed us that we should have good notice of any attempt to blow up a mine, as it had to be loaded and tamped in with sandbags, and, of course, they would not do that until they stopped digging. That sounded reasonable and we lived on waiting for the stoppage of the digging. Captain Schofield and I returned

after an inspection of the right sector to our headquarters dug-out and were just seating ourselves when the back wall seemed to hit us in the backs. The mine! We leaped out and, looking up, leapt back just in time to miss the debris coming down again. Then out we went again. The trench where we were had been filled with earth and those in the front line must have been blown up. We could see no men at all, and waiting with drawn revolver whilst Schofield fetched the supports gave me a most decided Boy - stood - on - the - burning - deck - sort - of - feeling. Visions of Turkish attacks. Would the supports arrive in time? Then round the corner walked a member of the staff. 'Good afternoon, Waller, what's happened here?' 'The Turks have blown up the trench.' 'Where are all your men?' 'I don't quite know. Underneath, I expect.' 'Don't you think you had better dig them out?' 'Well, it's only just happened and I'm wondering whether the Turks are going to attack and I've just sent for supports.' 'Oh, well, then, I think I had better go back to headquarters.' I was again alone in the trench. The Turks had been as wily as reputed. We were told afterwards by an officer of the Welsh Horse whom we subsequently dug out that they only stopped digging a moment or so before the mine was fired, obviously in another gallery. The digging out of the men and the clearing of the trench was indeed a labour. The earth had to be removed in sandbags more than two hundred yards down the communication trench. The rescue work was also hampered by a Turkish machine gun, which fired day and night at a few well chosen spots and their shooting was much too accurate for us to take risks. We had close upon twenty casualties in the sector and the mine was only a very small one. It is astonishing the stores that were lost. It is related that over a year later in Palestine a certain man informed his company commander that his waterproof sheet was lost in the mine."

October's casualties were 51, almost the same number as in September. The Battalion's strength was 360 of all ranks. Life in the reserve gully at this time is described by Lieut. Clive Needell. "The officers of one company of the Battalion had made a dug-out right into the side of a steep hill, so that the hill itself formed the roof. Inside the dug-out a table was made in the centre and on each side a bunk of sandbags to serve either as a bed or as seats was placed. When the colder weather came a blanket was hung over the door to keep out the cold wind. With the usual luck of the Gallipoli campaign, just as the last fly died from cold, an issue was made of a special fly-killer in the form of a paste. This came too late for killing flies, so one ingenious person hit on the bright idea, as candles were very scarce, of inserting a wick in the fly-killer and using it as an illuminant! One officer who belonged to this company was the proud possessor of a little wooden chair, made for him by the pioneer sergeant. When the very cold weather came, at the time of the blizzard, the officers of this Company, plus as many more officers as could

get in, crowded into this dug-out and all the available wood was gathered in and a fire started *inside* the dug-out to keep the occupants warm (one can scarcely imagine what the atmosphere inside was like). The proud possessor of the chair, however, was on duty and, therefore, not sitting in it or sharing the warmth of the dug-out. Fuel for the fire was extremely short. The following messages, therefore, passed between the Company commander and the possessor of the chair: 'Captain ———'s compliments to Mr. ———, and may he burn his chair?' 'Mr. ———'s compliments to Captain ———, Not ——— likely!' On November 2nd I was evacuated on to the hospital ship 'Nevasa.' War must always be a series of contrasts, but I think there could be no contrast greater than this one. Only a few hundred yards of sea separated all the filth, discomfort, danger, unpleasant food and lack of water from perfect comfort, beds with sheets, hot baths, delicious food and, at that time, perfect safety. Directly I got on board (having been transferred from the pier at Anzac by means of a lighter) I was given a hot bath. I left the clothes which I had been wearing on the peninsula in the bathroom and I never saw them again, so they were probably either thrown overboard or burnt. I was given a clean pair of pyjamas and put to bed in a cot with sheets!"

On November 5th the 5th Suffolks were relieved on Hill 60 and a day later a draft reported of two officers and 70 men. The Northants took the place of the 7th Essex men on November 10th. On November 14th careful preparations were made to explode the British mines upon the following day. Five galleries were to be fired under the Turkish front line at 5 p.m., when parties of the Welsh Horse were to advance the barricades in Beech and Ivy Lanes. A company of the 7th Essex, 100 strong, was to man the new trench between Ivy Lane and Middle Lane whilst the Battalion bombers occupied the advanced bombing post at Ivy Lane. At the time fixed the mines were fired and the artillery opened a heavy bombardment. A large quantity of debris fell into the front line works, but did no serious damage, a few men being injured. The Turks immediately retorted with rifle fire and then with a heavy artillery bombardment for half an hour. It was found that the tunnels in Beech and Ivy Lanes, round the barricades into the old Turkish communication trenches, in front of which the new barricades were to be built, were partially choked and that part of the existing barricade in the Lanes mentioned had fallen down owing to the force of the explosion. The Welsh Horse cleared the debris and advanced the barricades, unliking the new fire trench. Small parties of Turks were observed about 8 p.m. trying to get into the craters and fire was opened upon them, when the enemy desisted in the effort. Investigation during the night revealed that the explosion had wrought much greater damage than anticipated. A new crest had been practically formed to the hill by the mine

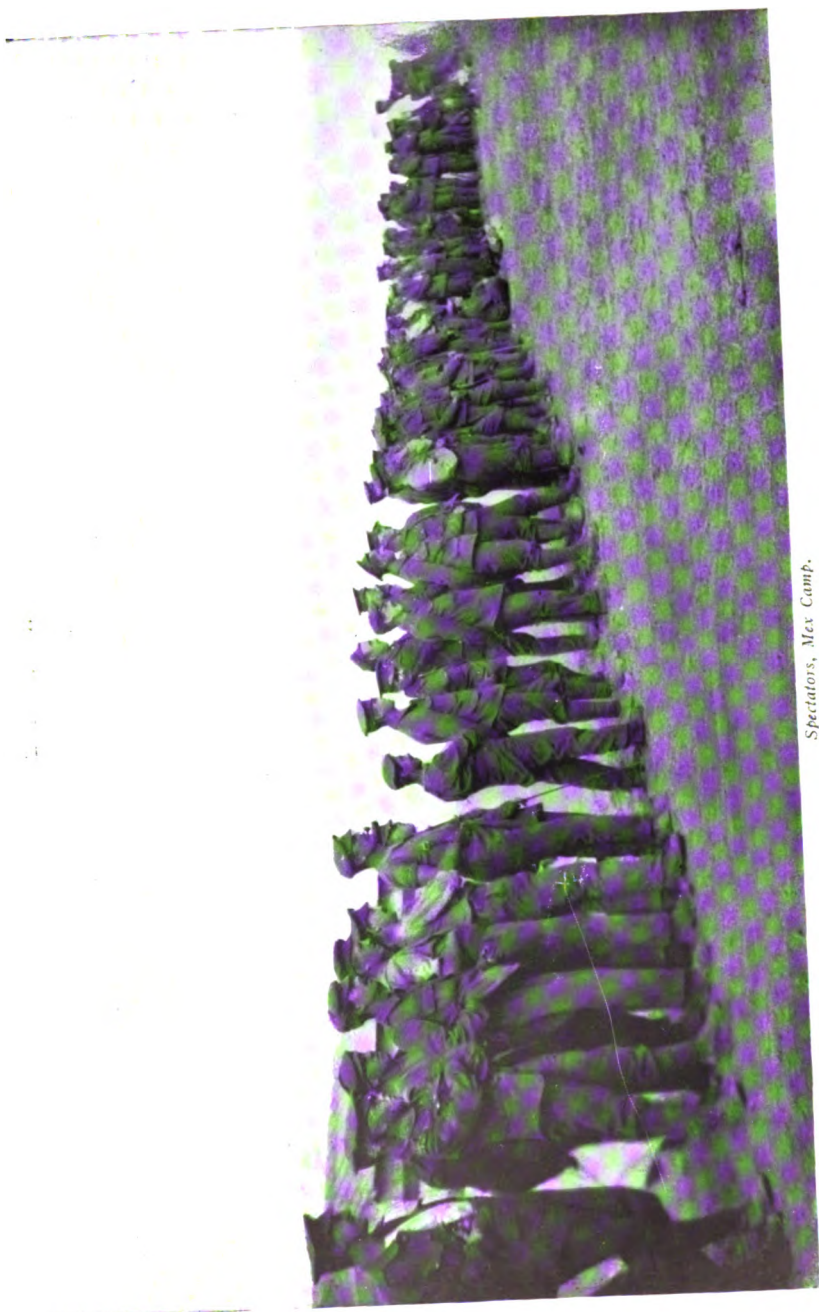
craters, and large lumps of earth were lying in front of the British trenches, obscuring the field of fire. "We were for it. The assault parties were all made up," wrote an officer. "At last we were going to do something and then orders came that there was to be no advance. We might blow up the mine, but the advance was off. We watched the explosion from the reserve trenches. It was colossal and Hill 60 must have become Hill 55 or 65, but certainly was not, and will not be, the same place again." At dawn the next day the 7th Essex relieved the 5th Suffolks as garrison. when work was continued upon the new barricades in Ivy Lane, The Battalion was in turn succeeded by the Suffolks on the 17th, who handed over to the 7th Essex on November 20th. Upon this day the enemy exploded a mine under Essex Barricade in Beech Lane, completely destroying the bombing post at that point, killing 16 men and wounding 10. Eight of the former were of the Welsh Horse, who were working in a gallery close to the scene of the explosion. The barricade was rebuilt during the night of the 21st-22nd by the Welshmen. The Battalion garrisoned Hill 60, and on the night of the 23rd an enemy working party was surprised opposite Ivy Lane, suffering an estimated loss of a dozen. The next day the Northants took over and the Essex went into support. On November 26th orders were received that the 163rd Brigade would be relieved by the Eastern Mounted Brigade and the Indian Brigade. A violent thunderstorm occurred in the afternoon and part of the communication trench across the Dere collapsed, making passing to and fro very difficult. Men had to wade waist deep in water at that point. The Ghurkas, who had the firestep raised to accommodate them, took charge of Hill 60 on November 27th, when the rain again started and developed into a blizzard. All next day it snowed and continued freezing until the 30th. "We had had no rain since we landed," said an Essex officer, relating his experiences of this trying period, "but would it always remain dry? What was the meaning of all these gullies? They looked as if they were watercourses. We were soon to see. My company had been sent over to support the Norfolks, so I do not know at first hand how the Hill suffered, but I shall never forget the night. We were warned that at 7 p.m. all the guns on the Peninsula, and the battleships as well, would fire a salvo. A most excellent firework display, but then the heavens joined in. The rain started. My batman had dug me the usual kind of shelter in the side of the Hill and covered it with waterproof sheets, and I crawled in, but not for long. I was literally washed out. How it rained! Trenches were soon full to the brim. Muddy figures stood about the hillsides and tried to make shelters, for they could not go into the valleys. Then the rain and wind stopped and the frost came. It was so fierce that it was possible to walk upon the ice in the trenches in the morning—that will enable the reader to faintly realize the misery of it all. We could do nothing but hope for the morning. Day broke and when the sun appeared

there before our eyes was a real, good English winter morning. People at home might rub the frost off the windows and say 'What a lovely day!' But on Gallipoli friend and foe were alike in a pitiful state. Not a shot was fired; it was as if an armistice had been signed. We were on top and so were the Turks; there was nowhere else to go unless one wanted to be drowned. Then some genius introduced O'Grady's Drill. The good old parlour game again. 'The squad moves only when the order is prefixed by the caution!' We got a little circulation back that way. The blizzard cured my dysentery, so I don't bear it much grudge and that day we rejoined the Battalion and drew our ration of six sheets of corrugated iron per company, the first we had had issued. No more dug-outs were sited in watercourses. 'B' Company's had stood the strain and I was lucky enough to take it over. Our promised relief was about due, so we were informed, and we were to have a month's rest in Mudros. Ours not to reason why or how, but the Ghurkas took over Hill 60. Poor devils! How they suffered from frostbite and yet appeared as well groomed as if they were living in barracks."

In the early days of December the Battalion was in support at Hill 60 and then, on December 6th, it left Anzac for Mudros. "Never a more welcome move," wrote an officer of the 7th, "or a more efficient and speedily conducted one, I'm sure. Four months after landing we were again at sea. Little did we know that it was part of the evacuation of the Anzac and Suvla areas—a better managed affair, I am certain, never happened. A hot bath. Doors that opened and shut with handles. Water flowing from a tap. Enough to drink. We hadn't much inclination to eat yet. It's wonderful what an appreciation of the comforts of civilization four months in Gallipoli gave me. At Mudros West we reverted to the 161st Brigade and the 4th Northants to the 162nd, the 8th Hampshires and 5th Norfolks returning to the 163rd Brigade. The Colonel was once again greeted with a 'present' by the sentry, accompanied by the cheers of the assembled troops, who wanted to see whether he could remember what to do and had laid the trap for him. Letters and parcels came to hand. Then we had a wonderful Christmas dinner—we could not wait for December 25th. The food was all out of tins, I'm afraid, including the pudding, which was Harwood's contribution, having been sent out by his mother, with a box, if the label could be believed, of wonderful cigars. The cigars were reserved for after the feast and nobody was allowed to see them, to which arrangement the owner also kept strict faith. What a feast! The last scrap of pudding had gone its appointed way and the moment arrived. The box was produced by its proud and generous donor and a bayonet inserted. A hot flush mantled our host's face—nothing but a sprig of holly for the Christmas pudding lay exposed therein. No apology from anyone was necessary. The cigars would have been forgotten long ere this, but that sprig of holly—that bit of England—never!

Can you imagine embarking on a transport, such as the s.s. 'Marathon,' which we did on December 13th, looking into the saloon and seeing the tables laid with countless knives, forks and glasses, spotless cloths and napkins, rolls, menus and wine lists, hearing the officers' mess call and then having to see your men settled first? It was a great test of our early training. And so to Alexandria. Christmas day was spent at Mex camp and there we heard of the complete evacuation of Gallipoli. Where the footballs came from I don't remember, but I do remember the match played between the sergeants and officers at Mex. I don't know whom the two officers were who were not chosen to play, but I imagine Captain Warner, the Quartermaster, was one, as I played in goal myself. The result was a draw, but it can be understood that we were already feeling much better. Can you imagine the sound that would come from the Battalion marching at attention and seeing the first girl they had met for four months? Groppi's cake shop, new clothes and we were becoming almost human again." The Battalion's task on the Peninsula, particularly on Hill 60, had been most trying, but there was one act of recognition of their work which the Battalion will never forget. The divisional commander (Major-General Inglefield), in sending a box of comforts to the Battalion, wrote to Major Kembell, "I am sending you, for the regiment, a box of comforts which was given to me when I was in hospital in Alexandra by Mrs. Walrond. She was anxious that these comforts should be given to men in the trenches and as there were not more than would go round a weak battalion, I selected your battalion, the men having experienced continuous and trying work on Hill 60."





Spectators, Mex Camp.



En Route from Mer.

IN THE CANAL ZONE.

The next period of service of the 161st Brigade was concerned with the protection of the Canal Zone, that easily ruptured artery of communication between Europe and India. It was menaced from the two sides—on the west by the Senussi and on the east by the Turks. Careful military precautions had, therefore, to be taken. The work was monotonous, lacking variety, but, none the less, vital to the successful conduct of the war. The sand of the desert was ever with the troops and the occasional glimpse of the green of an oasis was a delightful relief. When going on a week's leave to Cairo, a sergeant of the 4th wrote, "At the first patch of green vegetation we could only stare and stare. The contrast was so great from the blinding glare of the sun on the sand, for it had been :—

Sand to the right of us,
Sand to the left of us,
Sand in front of us,
Sand behind us.
Miles deep under us,
In a storm it's over us,
And even inside us—
When blown on the grub."

There was also a tale told of a soldier who died on the Sinai Peninsula. He arrived in Hades and after a little while sought Satan and asked him, "Have I to stay here always?" On receiving an affirmative reply, he said, "Well, let me go back to Sinai to fetch my great-coat. I'm chilly here."

The Brigade relieved the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade on the posts between Sidi Mergheb and Daba, with headquarters at El Hammam, forty miles from Alexandria, on December 28th, and thus became part of what was later known as the Western Frontier Force. Frierghab to Ghirbaniyat was held by the 6th Essex; Ruweisat to El Rahman by the 4th Essex, and Ghazal to Daba (railhead) by the 7th Essex, with the 5th at El Hammam. Each railway station was prepared for defence and held by a detachment. The duty of the Brigade was to guard the Khedivial railway running along the coast from Alexandria to Daba and also to check the passage of supplies from the east to the Senussi, who were in communication with Turkey by means of "U" boats. There were no signs of the Senussi, but they were reported to be gathering at two oases forty miles south. By January 8th Brigade headquarters had been established at Hammam and the battalions occupied the points between Sidi Mergheb and Daba. El Hammam was an important market centre, with a good supply of water, and the 1/5th Essex, who were in garrison there, with a squadron of

Yeomanry and some armoured cars, found plenty of work to do in strengthening the defences and also in patrol, for which purpose trotting camels were provided, which the men soon learned to ride exceedingly well. The line was also patrolled as far as Daba by means of an armoured train, which was manned by Captain Colvin and a detachment of eighty men from the 1/5th. Not only was damage inflicted to the track by enemy raids, but on occasion the heavy rains also caused interruption. On January 12th a squadron of Herts Yeomanry reconnoitred Zaweit Sidi Abd-el-Ati, supported by a small detachment of the 1/5th Essex, 50 strong, under Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, but the Senussi had dispersed before the arrival of the horsemen. There were reports of enemy intention to blow up the line in the middle of January and warning was issued to all posts, but nothing happened. As El Hammam was only five miles from the sea, there was frequent bathing and there were also visits to places of historic interest near at hand. Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons mentions an excursion by Ford car to an ancient stronghold, Abu Sir, of Greek or Roman origin, and with the remains of a fine Roman lighthouse nearby, built of brick and stone. On another occasion he visited the ruins of a great cathedral named Abu Mena, after St. Menas, a Roman soldier, who was beheaded for his Christian faith in the Third Century, and whose martyrdom was commemorated at this spot because it was said that when the body was being transported to Egypt for burial the camels stayed at the spot and refused to move. The Colonel also mentions the arrival of the Bikanir Camel Corps, an Indian unit, under Lieut.-Colonel Rawlinson, from Wadi Natrun, "looking most picturesque as they appeared in the distance in open desert formation. They were fully mobile, carrying everything on their camels, which were of a much larger breed than ours." Another interesting experience of the Colonel's was his first trip in an aeroplane with Captain Van Reyneveld, M.C., who was knighted after the war for a flight from Cairo to Cape Town. A visit was paid to the post by Jennings Bramley Bey, who was accompanied by a party of friendly Bedouin, serving without pay, from their personal attachment to this intrepid Englishman. A party of an officer and twenty men from the 1/5th went with him on a small operation towards the end of February, occupying five days, which had for its object the interception of camel convoys going west. The Senussi were heavily defeated at Sollum at this time and the removal of this threat had an immediate effect upon the disposition of the troops. On March 4th the 2nd County of London Yeomanry took over custody of the line and on March 5th the 5th, 6th and 7th Essex left by train for Mena Camp, near Cairo, lying under the shadow of the Pyramids, and where two of the brigades of the 54th were already encamped. The 1/4th followed some days later, having been detained as garrison at El Hammam and adjacent posts. Whilst in camp a visit was paid by G.O.C. troops in Egypt, General Sir James Maxwell. Field training was actively



Rear Truck, Armoured Train.



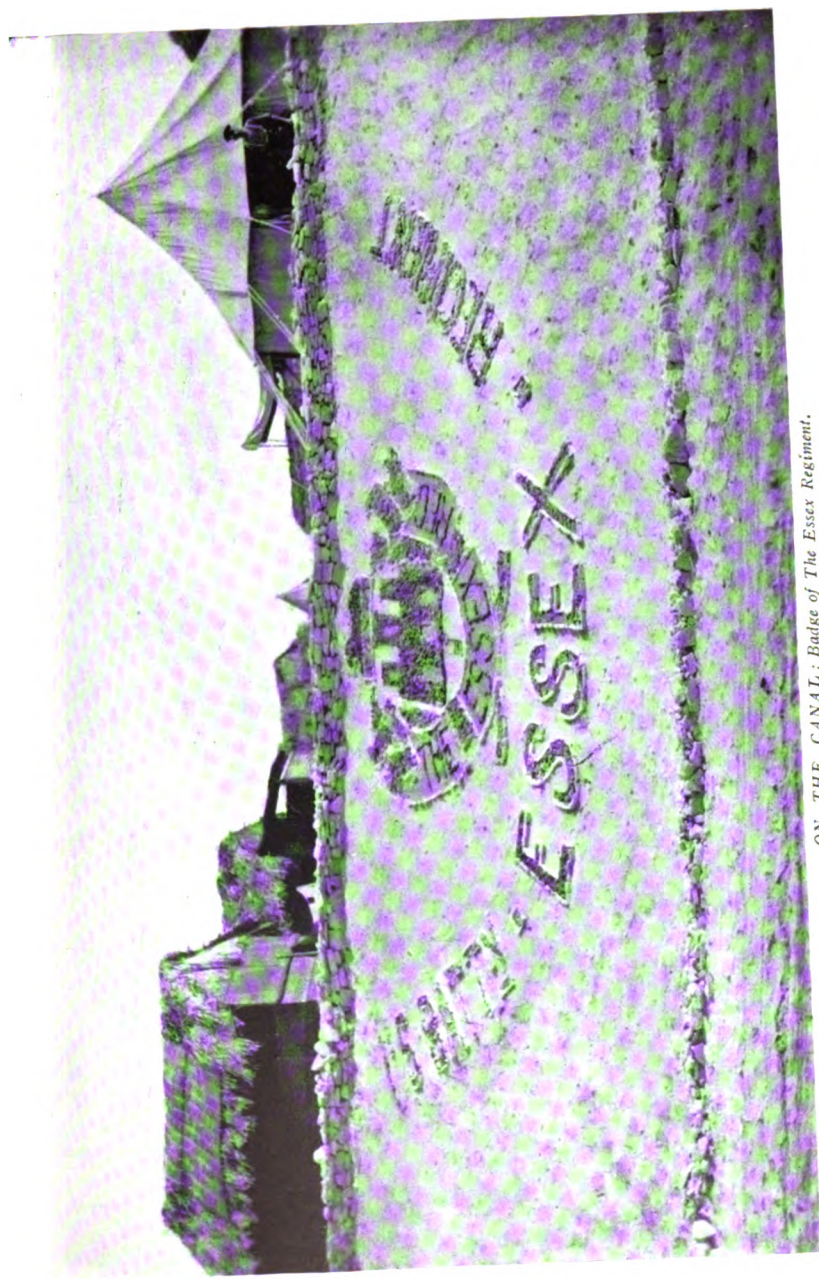
EL HAMMON.

undertaken until the end of March, when orders came to move to Shallufa, in the Southern Canal Section, to the south of the Little Bitter Lake, for the purpose of taking over the line of posts held by the 42nd Division.

GUARDING THE CANAL.

This important series of desert posts had been constructed by the 42nd Division (Lancashire Territorials) and the larger among them were consequently named from well-known North Country towns—Manchester, Ashton, Oldham, Salford and Wigan. They were in two lines—one some distance out in the desert and the other upon the Canal. Their design was similar and a description of Oldham Post will, therefore, suffice. It lay some six miles from the Suez Canal and three miles from its neighbour, Salford. Ashton was three miles farther into the desert and on the somewhat higher ground. The nearest post on the Canal to Oldham was Geneffe, a signal station, which at the time was a large military camp, whilst Shallufa was the railway station, reached by a swinging pontoon bridge over the Canal. From Shallufa a narrow gauge railway ran through Geneffe to the railhead, then another to Manchester, and after that a trying march over the sand had to be undertaken to Oldham. In the later months of the Brigade's occupation, however, a metalled road was completed right up to the post. It was roughly circular in form, surrounded by well-constructed barbed wire entanglements, with projecting fences (or aprons) of barbed wire to break up any attack and to allow of enfilade fire from machine guns and Lewis guns. Inside the barbed wire a communication trench ran right round the post, this allowing ample cover for the troops and easy access to the strong posts, which were so sited as to command the country in front. They were furnished with firesteps and machine gun emplacements, a tank of water, supply of iron rations and ammunition, so that if isolated they could maintain the fight. In the centre of the post, underground, were placed the following: Battle headquarters, ammunition store, main water storage and dressing station for R.A.M.C. The trenches represented laborious effort. The sand would not hold, so after it had been removed—great cavities had to be made to secure trenches of moderate size—wooden revetments (fences lined with canvas) had to be put in and these, to withstand the pressure of the sand, had to slope outwards, so that the top of the trench was wider than the floor. The tops of the revetment hurdles were then anchored to sandbags, which were placed at ground level, and, finally, the whole cavity, with the exception of the trench, was filled in again. The entrance to the post was through a gap in the wire about eight yards wide and could, in emergency, be quickly closed by a movable apron fence of barbed wire. The communication trenches were partially roofed to prevent them filling with sand. The garrison lived above ground under canvas, having the double

lined bell tents usual in the Tropics. Matting huts were used for the two cookhouses, one each for officers and for other ranks, orderly room, messing room, officers' mess ante-room (meals being taken in an E.P. tent), small canteen and quartermaster's stores. There was some amount of space for parades and recreation. The number of the former were restricted owing to the digging and repair work which was continually required to be done, but when, later on, much of this labour was supplied by Egyptians, the time devoted to military training was very much extended. Active recreation was not possible during the hot portion of the year, but when the temperature moderated football was played. A greater degree of comfort was obtainable than when on the march, as more kit and furniture were allowed in the posts. Supplies for the canteen were purchased from Greek storekeepers who set up in business at Shallufa on the Egyptian side of the Canal. Biscuits, sweets, beer, mineral waters, tinned fruit, salmon, sardines, tinned beans and the like were obtainable, though prices were rather high. The cost was enhanced in the early days by the pilfering which occurred from the camels carrying the goods to the front line posts and also because of the breakage of bottles. Beer was difficult to obtain and remained so until orders were issued that the Egyptian breweries were not to execute requests for civilians until the troops had been adequately supplied. One bottle per man could be purchased when a consignment was to hand and the few teetotalers became most popular in that they purchased their ration and passed it on to their comrades. On the occasion of a concert, it was decided to utilize part of the profits from the canteen in a gratuitous issue of a bottle of beer. The evening before an officer overheard a conversation between two men, one of whom was the battalion "grouser." "Fine, ain't it?" said one. "Free beer to-morrow." "Yes," replied the other, "and free whiskies and sodas for the officers, I suppose!" The water supply was at first brought up daily by camels just before sunset in copper fanatis—receptacles holding about fifteen gallons each. It was poured into tanks at the principal water storage or at the different strong posts. A more plentiful supply was obtained later by means of water pipes laid on to the posts and the water ration was increased. Large baths were then made of huge tarpaulins, stretched out and with the sides held up by a sandbagged wall. All ranks were thus able to enjoy what up to that time had been a rare treat. Up to November, 1915, the troops on the eastern bank were supplied by water barges from Port Said, Ismailia and Tewfik, but that could not suffice for the increasing number of units employed. Deep tube wells were sunk. Although they went to a depth of 300 feet, nothing but salt water was obtained. The Sweetwater Canal was, therefore, tapped and the filtered water taken across the Canal to ten concentration points, two of which were at El Ferdan and Shallufa. Ferry Post received its water, already filtered, from



ON THE CANAL: Badge of The Essex Regiment.



SUEZ CANAL: Trench Construction.

Ismailia town, whilst Kabrit was supplied by water barges. On the eastern bank the water was pumped into concrete reservoirs, from which pipe lines took the liquid to the front line posts. At dusk sentry groups were stationed at various points outside the wire of the posts. The reliefs, with their non-commissioned officers, remained by the wire and the sentry was in each case stationed some yards out in the desert. This arrangement, although tactically sound, was very trying for the officer in charge of outposts. Accompanied by the non-commissioned officer, he had to make his visit twice during the night. The difficulty of the task could only be appreciated when it was undertaken. Tropical nights are always pitch dark and the officer had nothing to guide him except the stars. Steering a course by such means was difficult when making a circular tour. Collisions with the barbed wire were frequent and the round often took a surprisingly long time to accomplish. A noticeable feature of Oldham was the orderly room, which was surmounted by a large wooden cross. Newcomers mistook it for the church, but the cross was erected solely for the purpose of carrying the signal cable.

On April 1st the 1/6th Essex took over Wigan Post, the 1/5th garrisoned Manchester Post and the 1/4th and 1/7th were in reserve at Shallufa. The Brigade widened its area of responsibility in the middle of May, when the 1/4th Essex relieved the 1/6th Essex at Wigan Post and the 1/7th replaced the 1/5th at Manchester Post. The 1/4th also took over Ashton Post, with one company at Geneffe railhead, the 1/5th were quartered at Salford, with two companies at Oldham Post, and by the end of May the 1/6th Essex were at Geneffe, with one company at Kabrit, at the point where the Great Bitter Lake merges into the Little Bitter Lake. All the battalions were busily employed in entrenching these positions, for they had been made responsible for the safety of traffic along Little Bitter Lake and approximately five miles of the section of the Canal from Shallufa Lock towards Suez. The posts were some two to five miles to the east of the Canal, upon which side the Turks were active, so that the Brigade were once again facing their foes of Gallipoli. "Thus began," wrote Colonel Gibbons, "a very laborious and tedious sojourn in the Wilderness," and which lasted for nine months in the hottest year that Egypt had known for some time. "The sand of the Sinai Peninsula is surely the finest in the world. It got into everything, one's hair, eyes and ears were full of it. So was the food. It got in between the layers of the soles of one's boots, gradually forming a lump inside as hard as stone. It stopped every watch in the camp." This fine sand was blown constantly in the wind, forming great dunes in a single night, and the labour caused in digging and making excavations for water storage, command posts, dressing stations and communication ways, with overhead cover, may be better imagined than endured. "The trenches were revetted with hurdles, lined with canvas, or close boarded. When

placed in position they had to be securely anchored with very long wires to take the great strain of the fluid sand. A couple of courses of sandbags completed the parapet and paradoss. Even the sandbags had to be used double, one inside the other, or they would be empty in a very short time, so fine was the sand." When the Palestine campaign was in full swing these posts were salvaged and most of the material was used in the trench system before Gaza. "I'm sure," wrote an officer, "the sand has now obliterated entirely our work during the last months of 1916 before we left the Canal to trek to Gaza." Hot days were succeeded by cold nights and heavy dews. Black ants and scarab beetles swarmed everywhere; scorpions and sand vipers were there; with foxes, jackals, chameleons and sand mice in plenty. When not digging trenches and garrisoning posts, the men were exercised in long desert marches, which training was to stand them in good stead later, when they trekked from El Qantara to Gaza. The formation which was most generally used was lines of platoons in fours, with the fours opened out to one pace interval between men and with no two platoons marching in the same track. In this way fifteen miles a day would be covered, with water discipline so strict that none was touched until after three hours' marching. The uncanny silence of the desert was a trying experience for the sentries, who had to remain alert and were always expectant of surprise. At these desert posts it was customary for the picquet officer to ride from one post to the next at dawn each day in order to see if there were any footmarks leading to the Canal. They were detected in a novel way. A native led a camel over the tract every evening dragging a log of wood about 25ft. wide to smooth the sand. Upon this an intruder's footprints could be quickly detected and the matter investigated. The reason for special vigilance was the possibility of a mine being laid in the Canal, which would have caused disastrous delay to the shipping had it exploded. Duty on the Canal represented more diversity of interest, for shipping was always passing and passengers threw tins of cigarettes to the troops, who dived into the Canal after them.

"Camel patrols were constantly out. When thus engaged," wrote an officer, "my thoughts, curiously enough, turned to politics. There seems small reason that a jog-trot on a not over comfortable beast across sandy wastes should make one think of the old verbal tussles with those of opposite opinion on such questions as fiscal reform, national defence, or Home Rule. It cannot even be accounted for by the fact that the officer commanding the Camel Company in this area is a Conservative Member of Parliament and a prominent member of the Unionist Social Reform Committee. A small party starts on camels, with arms, ammunition, food, water, field glasses and compass, and strikes out into the desert, usually with the object of meeting some miles away another group who have advanced in another direction to discover whether the enemy

are in the neighbourhood. At the appointed spot you alight, have a smoke and a yarn, just as though in Great Britain instead of in the midst of the desert—the last place in the world you thought you would ever visit, even in your wildest dreams. As the camel proceeds over the vast expanse of glittering sand, here and there are seen tiny patches of wonderful green—the one relief from the monotony of outlook. Those patches always remind me of my political opponent's measures—huge amounts of barren efforts, improved by the occasional infusion of some sound principle. And the whole outlook when crossing the desert brings to mind the difficulties of the social reformer. As your camel trots along, a range of sandhills appears only five miles away, yet it is probably thirty, and as you ride on it almost seems to get farther and farther off. So the solution of social problems in the Old Country has appeared so near at times, but has actually been far off, and has almost seemed to recede with each attempt by the reformers."

Life at Kabrit, which was situate at the head of Little Bitter Lake, though isolated, was not displeasing to the Brigade, if we may judge from one or two extracts from letters. "We are not on an island," wrote one, "although almost so, for water surrounds three of our sides. We have the telephone and telegraph and a light railway carries stores up from the beach. Our water is stored in a capacious reservoir. We live in tents and have a good football pitch, marked by goalposts visible from all parts of the camp. But that we are at what may be termed an isolated post is true, for there is only one means by which people and goods arrive—that is, by the daily boat. Does a general want to inspect us? A day's notice is given, he comes by the steamer and has to return in an hour's time. (Cheers!) Rations, newspapers, mails, canteen goods and articles for officers' mess all come by the vessel that we have named the 'Eastern Belle.' Its arrival is the one item of daily excitement and so great was the crush on the pier at one time that regulations had to be made to ensure comfort and order." "Except for the 'Lynx,' the Canal tug," wrote another, "which brought our rations, we had no visitors! A monitor was always stationed in the lake and after the first introductions we became very intimate and arranged cricket and polo matches. Our meals on board were luxurious in comparison with our meagre diet on land, but the surroundings were too pleasant to let that disturb us. Even though there was not a tree or bush in sight for miles on our side of the lake, the view of the cultivation on the other side was charming. Our work on trenches and earthworks was always followed by a dip, so we were most healthy." Later the same officer found desert conditions very different. He removed with his company to Ashton Post and then went to Shallufa by train *en route* to Ferry Post. "At dawn we were marching to the bridge-head and we were just in time to catch a convoy of empty lorries proceeding to the

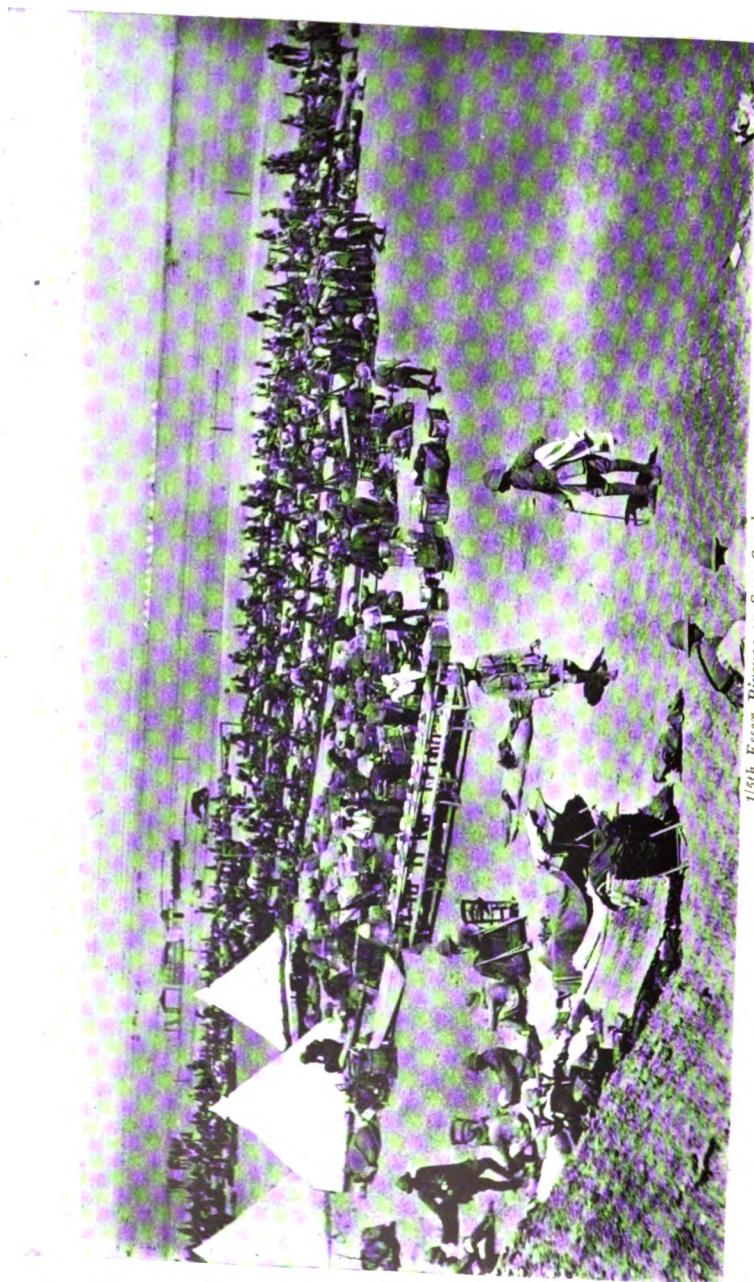
railhead—otherwise, we should have had to march those eight miles along the desert road! On arrival I was told to take over Katoomba II Post, about six miles away in a direction pointed out to me, but no guide! I was given the company officer's horse to enable me to take over the post before my platoon arrived. Somehow I got there. The camp was in a hollow and the flies made the air black. The water was rationed until a pipe line was subsequently laid. The flies caused sickness, and when my platoon was not strong enough to garrison the post we were relieved."

To general regret, Brig.-General F. W. Daniell, who had commanded the Brigade since it had been on active service, vacated his appointment on June 19th. He was succeeded by Brig.-General W. Marriott-Dodington, of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, who had seen much service in Gallipoli. He led the Brigade for nearly two years and was in command during the critical battles of Gaza. Throughout that period he won the confidence and esteem of all ranks. Indeed, in more than one instance, he was found willing to take the consequences of others' actions even when he could with perfect propriety have absolved himself from direct responsibility. An officer who met him shortly after his appointment found him extremely pleasant and desirous of finding out all he could about all ranks. He had strong ideas about training and the responsibility of commanders (particularly the junior ranks). It was this trait which made him popular and it also caused him to be well acquainted with the capabilities and characteristics of all ranks. The General expected officers to know something of the antecedents of their men and a story illustrates this point of view. On one occasion, after inspecting a company, he asked the officer in charge which man was a baker, which was a wheelwright and so on, when suddenly he turned and enquired, "And now which of your men is a poacher?"

The Brigade was engaged all June upon defence work at the posts. Early in the month headquarters were removed to Geneffe and inspections of the posts were frequent by G.O.C.-in-Chief and the G.O.C. 54th Division. Early in July the 1/6th relieved 1/5th at Oldham and Salford posts. A company of the 1/5th took the place of 1/6th at Kabrit and headquarters and three companies were stationed at Geneffe. On July 13th the 1/11th Londons succeeded the 1/7th at Manchester Post. Company training was in active progress, when on July 20th orders were received to hold the 1/5th and 1/7th in Canal reserve, in readiness to move, and for this purpose the 1/4th relieved the company of the 1/5th stationed at Kabrit. The machine guns, with detachments, were withdrawn from the desert posts and concentrated at Shallufa, where the Brigade machine gun company, which was composed of personnel from the four battalions, entrained at midnight on July 21st-22nd for Qantara, whither it was followed next day by four of the guns, which had not arrived in time to move with the company. Then at 4.45 on July 28th,



SINAI DESERT : Salford Post.



115th Essex Bivouac on Suez Canal.

the 1/7th entrained at Shallufa for Ballah station, *en route* for Ballybunion, a desert railhead, and at 8.10 p.m., nearly 900 strong, the 1/5th also entrained for Ballah, whence half the battalion subsequently reinforced the 1/7th at Ballybunion. There had been rumours of a move for some days and the battalions had been relieved of articles of base kit, which made them much less comfortable than they had been for some time. The 1/5th were at lunch on July 28th when orders were received for the camp to be immediately struck. All ranks were very excited at the prospect of active service, though the journey in open trucks was not enjoyed. The movement of troops northward was constant. It was not many days before the rest of the Brigade was also called upon. The Brigade signalling section and the 1/6th were transferred on August 4th to Ferry Post railhead, headquarters of "B" sub-section, No. 2 section, Canal defences. The Battalion, less two companies, took over three posts, whilst the remainder became responsible for the defence of Ferry Post railhead, all in relief of the 2/4th Queen's. The 1/4th Essex left No. 1 section and encamped at Moascar, moving subsequently to Serapeum. On August 25th the Brigade returned to Shallufa West by rail and once more, Colonel Gibbons records, "the dull daily round began. It was a most trying time for all ranks, the worst time of the whole war." The Machine Gun Company returned on August 26th.

The reason for the activity was an aggressive movement of the Turks from El Arish, which resulted in their complete defeat in the series of operations culminating in the Battle of Romani, and which opened the way for the subsequent advance upon Palestine. The enemy advance was detected by air reconnaissance on July 19th, when it was reported by the Royal Air Force that between 8,000 and 9,000 troops of the Turkish 3rd Division had established themselves upon the line, Bir el Abd—Bir Jameil—Bir Bayud. Although it was difficult to determine whether a raid was intended similar to that of Qatiya in April or a deliberate advance, nothing was left to chance. Troops from other sections of the Canal defences were immediately placed in motion for the North and thus it was that the 161st Brigade Machine Gun Company was brought into No. 3 Section, from which the subsequent operations were conducted. This company was the only unit of the 54th Division which actually took part in the battle, although the 5th and 7th Essex were in the immediate vicinity. By the evening of July 20th the enemy, with German machine gunners and Austrian artillery, commanded by Colonel Kress von Kressenstein, had entrenched south-east of Oghratina, with the left flank thrown forward to Bir el Mageibra and an advanced base at Bir el Abd. For some days the enemy were busily engaged in entrenching and, meanwhile, preparations were being made by Sir Archibald Murray to attack about the middle of August, by which time he calculated he would have sufficient transport in hand. On the night of July 27th-28th, however,

the Turks pushed forward a short distance, hence the hurried orders to the 1/5th and 1/7th to move to Ballah, which led to service within the sphere of operations. The aggressive intentions of the enemy were countered by the occupation of the Mahamdiya-Romani position. "The main strength of the force was concentrated in the Romani line, the remainder being disposed in echelon in positions along the road from Dueidar to Qantara, from which it was possible to reinforce the Romani lines by the railway running from Qantara to Pelusium Station, about five miles due west of Romani." On August 4th the enemy were committed to a strong attack upon the British position and a counter-offensive was initiated; at this critical juncture the 1/4th and 1/6th were transferred to No. 2 Section. With much manœuvring and steady fighting, the Turks were forced back and their entrenched line occupied, so that by August 12th the danger was over. The enemy, who were estimated at 18,000, lost 50 officers and 4,000 men as prisoners, whom the 1/5th Essex saw as they passed through Ballah on their way to internment. There were, in addition, 9,000 casualties. The Brigade Machine Gun Company were in the decisive fighting on August 5th, which took place around Mount Royston. They resisted a stiff attack, the noise of the firing being heard at Ballah. The Company suffered several casualties and some of the members were decorated for their gallant work. Whilst waiting for the word as to whether they were to participate or not, the 1/5th and 1/7th Essex devoted themselves to training and keeping fit. The posts manned were so complete that all that had to be done was night outpost work, with drill and short route marches during the day. Owing to enemy activity, there was special vigilance between sunset and sunrise. The maps showed an oasis a few miles away, so one morning a route march was made thereto. It was the first many had seen and they were surprised at the number of date palms, also the contrast between the vegetation in a small area and the barren desert outside. Then on August 23rd the 2/10th Middlesex took over Ballah defences and the 1/4th Royal Sussex those at Ballybunion. By the evening the two Essex battalions were on the west side of the Canal and then came orders for return to Shallufa for the resumption of the tedious desert watch.

During September there were several inspections by the G.O.C.-in-Chief and the G.O.C. 54th Division saw an attack upon Ashton Post carried out by training companies of the 5th, 6th and 7th Essex. The disposition of the Brigade at this time was: Shallufa and Manchester, 1/4th; Geneffe railhead, one company, 1/7th Essex; Salford, two companies, 1/5th Essex; Geneffe, 1/6th, less one company at Kabrit; Oldham Post, two companies, 1/5th Essex, and Ashton Post, 1/7th Essex, less one company. Training went on steadily, particularly in route marching, with musketry at Geneffe. Stragglers upon the line of march from the 1/5th were held to be in need of further training and were sent on an extra trip to Oldham Post the next day, in consequence

of which Colonel Gibbons tells us they became known as "Oldham Athletic," in ironic contrast to the well-known football team. Various reconnaissances in force were made. The most important was that against Bir et Tawil, situated about thirty miles east of El Kubri. A column led by Brig.-General A. Mudge, composed of three troops of Middlesex and Hertfordshire Yeomanry, two companies 1/5th Bedfords and one each of the 1/4th Northhamptons and 1/10th Londons, of the 162nd Brigade, reached the enemy's position on September 17th, but at their approach the garrison fled.

Training went on without interruption during October. Major C. R. Roberts West, Brigade Major, went sick early in November and his duties were temporarily undertaken by Major G. G. Ewer, 1/7th Essex. The 1/6th and 1/7th exchanged stations on November 4th, but this was the last move of the kind in No. 3 Section. Important changes were afoot. General headquarters had been moved from Ismailia to Cairo and the headquarters of the new Eastern Force came into being at Ismailia, under the command of Lieut.-General Sir Charles Dobell. A redistribution of troops was made to free a sufficient force for the next stage of the advance to Palestine. Nos. 1 and 2 sections of the Canal Defences were amalgamated into the Southern Canal Section and No. 3 Section was divided into two. One part became the Desert Column (Anzac Mounted Division and 42nd and 52nd Divisions) and the other the Northern Canal Section, which extended from the Canal as far east as Romani, and was later to reach El Arish. There was a considerable reduction of the garrison of the Southern Canal Section, the 53rd Division being wholly withdrawn. Thus it came about that the 161st Brigade was moved into the neighbourhood of Ismailia.

On November 15th Brigade headquarters, with the 1/7th and 1/4th Essex, entrained for El Ferdan, with the Machine Gun Company, less two sections, for that station and Moascar. The next day 1/5th and 1/6th Essex left for Moascar, the 161st Brigade having relieved the 158th and 159th Infantry Brigades. Brigade headquarters were at first at El Ferdan railhead, but they were transferred, on November 28th, to Ferry Post bridgehead, which lies opposite Ismailia, on Lake Timsah, north of the Great Bitter Lake. It was in this district that the Turks reached the Canal in their abortive campaign early in 1915. The defensive line was five miles out in the desert among great sand dunes, linked by a chain of small posts, whereat existence was more pleasurable than farther south because the heat was more tempered. Two companies of 1/7th Essex took over Ferdan bridgehead and the other two Ferdan railhead; two companies of the 1/6th became responsible for Katoomba, 1 and 2, Kembla and Gundagai posts. The two remaining companies were at Ferry Post railhead, with one and a half companies of the 1/5th Essex. On November 28th the 1/4th took over the whole of the front line posts at El Ferdan and a

section of the Machine Gun Company was moved from Ferry Post railhead to Round Hill and the Plateau Posts. Round Hill Post No. 1 was specially interesting because it was from this point that the Arab spies who went out on their camels into the Sinai desert were passed through the barbed wire entanglements. To this post they also returned. Cavalry patrols went in and out daily. The rest of the 1/5th were at Ferry Post bridgehead. The 12th Australian Light Horse were also at the same centre and responsible for daily patrol of the desert. The most friendly associations were established with this unit and with the crews of the cruiser "Euryalus," the French battleship "Requin" and several monitors. There was plentiful fishing, some shooting and inter-unit football matches. The weather was varied, there being at times heavy wind and rainstorms. Miss Lena Ashwell's concert party visited Ferry Post in December and there were special preparations for the celebration of Christmas. At the headquarters of the 1/6th, at Duntroon, for instance, there was a long day of entertainment, with a plentiful supply of beer. An inter-platoon comic football match was the appetiser for the dinner, which was prepared, cooked and served by the officers and N.C.O.'s. In the evening the officers dined and were serenaded by the sergeants, a visit being later paid by officers of a neighbouring post. The only regret was that two live chickens which had been fattened by Captain Rayner in readiness for the feast did not survive the heat and died on Christmas Eve. All assembled later in the men's messing hut for a concert, at which the concerted items, "Cockles and Mussels" and "Another little drink," were very popular. The 1/5th at Ferry Post also had dinner and sports, with a Christmas pantomime, which was received with great enthusiasm and was repeated several nights for the benefit of outlying companies. The inevitable German spy was in the cast and the Battalion's heavyweight boxer appeared with "enormous success" as the Fairy Queen.

New Year had scarce dawned, however, before the Brigade was aware that it would be needed for more active service. By December 31st El Arish had been occupied and the enemy driven over the frontier at Rafah, so that "the province of Sinai, which for two years had been partially occupied by the Turks, was freed of all formed bodies of Turkish troops." During the first week in January, 1917, the 53rd Division was concentrated complete at Romani and by January 13th the 54th Division had been assembled at Moascar. The 42nd Division having been ordered to France, the 53rd Division took its place at El Arish and at the end of January the 54th Division was in movement from Moascar to Mazar. Thus was the stage set for great events. Prior to these dates, however, there had been preparatory moves. On January 8th Brigade headquarters were changed from Ferry Post to Moascar. A day later the 1/6th and 1/7th Essex arrived from Ferry Post and Ferdan Railhead, followed on January 10th by the 1/4th and 1/5th from the same stations. On January

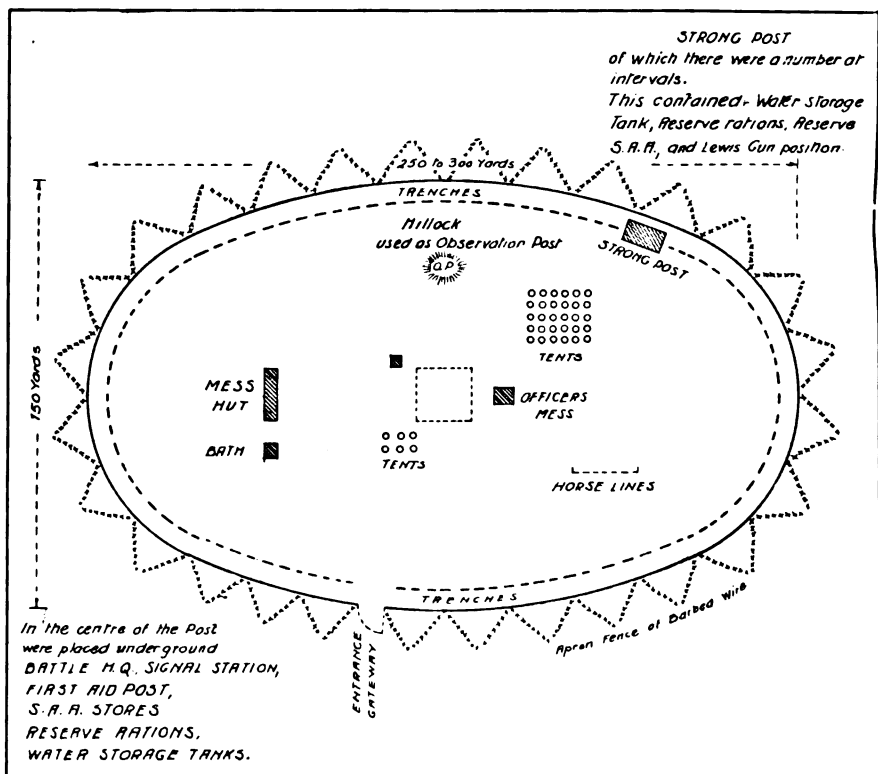
11th the 161st Machine Gun Company reported at Moascar, so that the whole Brigade was concentrated. "This was a very interesting period," wrote an officer, "as we felt there was 'something doing.' All ranks prepared for the anticipated move in good spirits. During the month all officers of the Division attended a conference at which staff officers explained the military situation on our expeditionary front." Whilst at Moascar new pack saddlery equipment for Lewis guns was drawn and battalions were soon busy organizing their Lewis gun sections. There were also brigade operations in the direction of Tell el Kebir and a divisional field day on January 26th. On the last day of the month good-bye was said to the Canal Zone. The Brigade marched to Ferdan *en route* for the Promised Land.

- 4th The 1/4th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel Jameson) entrained at Mex on December 28th, with Brigade headquarters and 1/7th Essex. The Battalion dropped detachments as follow: Ruweisat, 2 officers and 25 other ranks; El Omeiyid, 2 officers and 52 other ranks; El Alamein, 2 officers and 25 other ranks, with Battalion headquarters at El Rahman, 4 officers, medical officer and 170 other ranks. Conditions were not the most pleasant for a few days. There were no trains on January 4th and 5th, 1916, as the line had been damaged by rain. Before a regular service was running again, the Battalion was consuming the reserve rations, of which it held seven days' supply, and the water, it was estimated, would last for the next twenty-four hours. As minor troubles there were stakes, but no wire to affix to them; rifle oil was scarce and the boots and equipment had been without dubbing since the previous October. The effective strength of the Battalion on January 12th was 11 officers and 259 other ranks, upon which day the enemy were reported to be active. By the end of the month barbed wire was plentiful, with stakes and sandbags. The trenches quickly filled with sand from the constant storms which blew and the need for rifle covers was made manifest. The personnel had risen to 15 officers, medical officer and 292 other ranks by February 1st, notwithstanding the discharge of time-expired men. On February 10th four officers from the 12th Essex and 152 other ranks from the 3rd Bedfords reported for duty, having come by way of France. Five days later headquarters, with 4 officers and 115 other ranks, moved to Daba and went into camp next the 7th Essex, Major Wells being left in command of the party at El Rahman. The post at Ruweisat was given up to the 5th Essex on February 19th and when the 7th Essex sent an escort of 100 to a convoy to Matruh, on February 21st, the 4th Battalion took over some of their duties. At the end of the month the Battalion, which had increased to 19 officers and 415 other ranks, was distributed as follows: El Omeiyid, 3 officers and 50 other ranks; El Rahman, 4 officers and 60 other ranks; El Alamein, 3 officers and 25 other ranks; Daba (headquarters), 8 officers and 272 other ranks; Alexandria, 1 officer and 8 other ranks. The 4th, after receiving

a draft from England of one officer and 35 other ranks, concentrated at Daba and entrained for Cairo, which was reached at 9.30 a.m. on March 24th. Thence they marched ten miles to Mena and rejoined the 161st Brigade. At 7.50 p.m. on March 30th the Battalion, with 150 of the 5th Essex, travelled in open trucks to Shallufa, the 4th having a strength of 36 officers and 611 other ranks. They arrived at Shallufa at 2.30 the next morning, being the first battalion of the Division to take over duty in that sector. Before daylight the men had unloaded the baggage and removed it to the eastern side of the Canal by way of the pontoon bridge. It was there loaded upon service wagons and taken to the camp, one mile east of the Canal, where a Lancashire battalion of the 42nd Division was relieved. The whole of April was occupied in settling down and training. Spraying machines were used in the cookhouses to keep down flies. A Lewis gun section (four guns) was formed. By April 21st the strength of the Battalion had risen to 36 officers and 720 other ranks, and on the 25th, when the Prince of Wales passed through Shallufa, the Battalion was drawn up in line along the road from the Canal and cheered as he went by. Next day the temperature was 108 in the shade. The heat was greater in May, with plagues of flies. Rifle-covers were still badly needed, for the mechanism of the weapons was worn by the fine sand. The 4th were ordered to prepare to form part of a flying column at any moment, as there were reports of a Turkish advance. On May 19th 500 of the Battalion took over Wigan Post, 6½ miles from Shallufa, from the 6th Essex, leaving 6 officers and 240 men at Shallufa, attached to the latter unit. The relief took three hours, the garrison of the post, in addition to infantry, consisting of 25 R.E., one troop of Yeomanry and two 18-pounder guns. The 4th were on the move again on May 23rd, marching five miles to Ashton Post, near the southern end of Little Bitter Lake. Next day the defences were taken over from the 4th Norfolks. The remainder of the Battalion rejoined, but "B" Company was left at Geneffe railhead. The 7th Manchesters arrived from Suez to assist in the construction of the defences and Sundays were also utilized as working days. The Manchesters stayed until June 21st. Progress was very slow, however, for the post was sited upon an old sand dune and there was, in consequence, three or four times the usual amount of excavation. A party of thirty men were deemed to be doing well if they completed two yards of trench per working day of five hours. Another difficulty was the drifting sand set in motion by the wind. Excavation was confined to very short lengths, a few feet at a time. At the end of the month the strength of the Battalion was 36 officers and 816 other ranks. The unit was at Ashton Post for the whole of the month of June. The men watched a flying column of Yeomanry from Geneffe pass the post on a raid to destroy some wells in the vicinity. Instructions were received on June 21st that Lewis guns were to be used for protection



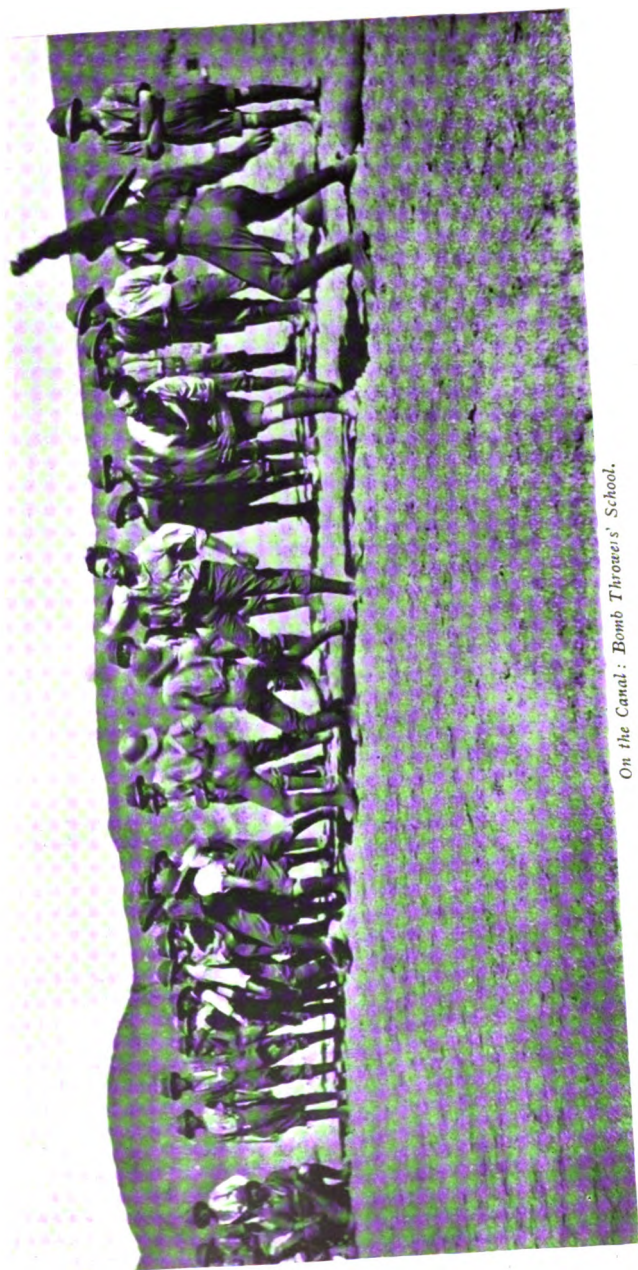
OFFICERS 14 ESSEX HEADQUARTERS, SEDI ABDEL RAHMAN.
 From left to right : Lieut-Col. Jameson, Lieut. Grahame, Adj., Capt. Swindels, R.A.M.C., Lieut. Butcher, Machine Gun Officer.



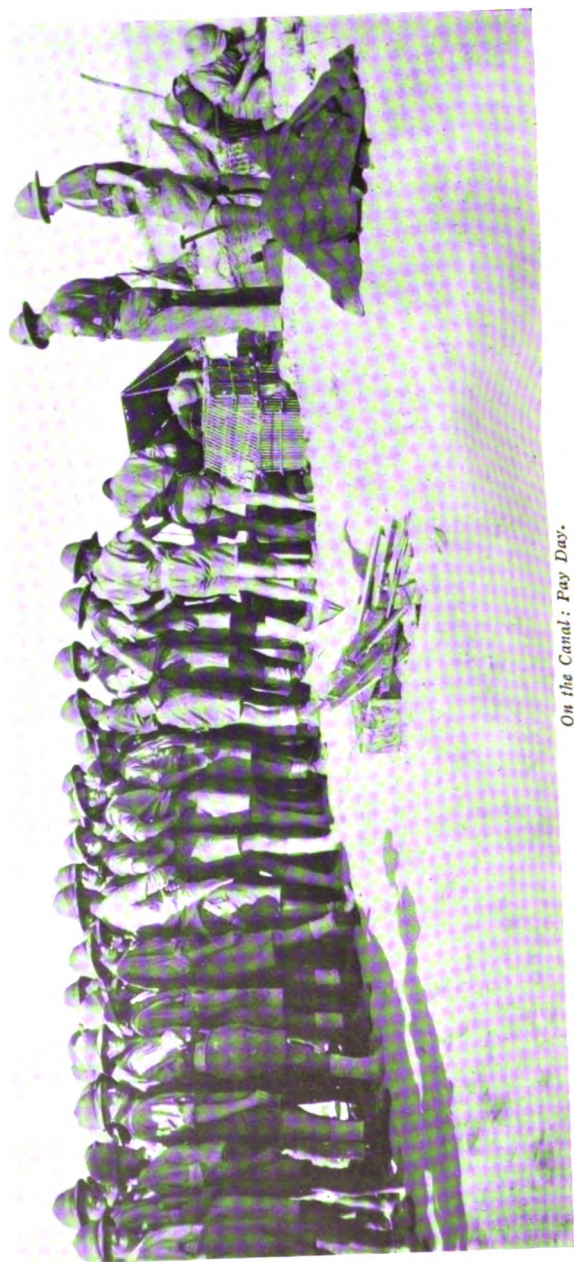
against aircraft instead of machine guns and one of them was immediately put into position upon an improvised mounting. Some privation was experienced on June 22nd owing to the temporary failure of the water supply from railhead, for the reserve stock was insufficient. The water difficulty continued and was investigated by Sir Archibald Murray when he visited the post on the 24th. The allowance per day was two gallons, but it had only averaged one and a quarter. The difficulty was that the pipe-line from Geneffe railhead was not yet in working order, but the Commander-in-Chief's insistence brought a better supply on June 25th. Two days later the allowance per man was raised to three gallons, which permitted the erection of tarpaulin baths, a welcome innovation. Life at the post was also rendered trying by the strong winds which blew and filled up several of the trenches, so that the work had to be done all over again in increasing heat. Uniforms were badly worn, the material not standing the strain of work in the hot weather. A new issue of clothing was made and, what was very welcome, a cover for rifles provided. A variation from the monotony of the desert watch was visits to Alexandria by successive parties of a week's duration. A squadron of Yeomanry and a detachment of the Camel Corps halted for a short time on June 29th whilst proceeding on a reconnaissance of wells to the east. The garrison practised a system of ground signalling for the purpose of conveying information to aeroplanes of the direction taken by enemy aircraft. Frequent conferences were held at Brigade headquarters with a view to effectively dealing with a possible enemy advance. A great deal of interest was taken on July 13th in firing practice by the R.F.A. at sand dune targets. A draft of two officers and 83 other ranks was reported to have arrived at Shallufa on the 18th, but it was not incorporated in the Battalion until its return from duty at the post, as reinforcements were kept upon the Canal for a month before being sent to desert posts. The 1/5th and 1/7th, being under orders to move at short notice, half "A" Company proceeded to Kabrit in relief of a company of the 1/5th on July 20th, the day after enemy aircraft dropped bombs upon Suez. Another draft of two officers and 80 other ranks reported on July 22nd, bringing the strength, less sick, to 45 officers and 983 other ranks. On the last day of the month the Battalion was ordered to be ready to move at short notice. Heavy gunfire was heard from the north all day on August 3rd and next day headquarters and two and a half companies marched from Ashton at 7.30 a.m., picked up "C" Company at Geneffe railhead and arrived at Shallufa West, after a ten miles march, at 11.45 a.m. The men were in excellent form and only four fell out. The Battalion left Shallufa at 4 p.m. and arrived at Moascar at 8 p.m., being attached to 159th Brigade, 53rd Division. Training was actively continued, but on August 19th the 1/4th left for Serapeum, between Timsah and the Great Bitter Lake, custody of which

was taken over from a battalion of the West India Regiment. A company was sent to Tussum Post, three miles to the north, another to Deversoir, three miles south, at the head of Great Bitter Lake, which company also found a detachment for Gebel Mariam. The Battalion was withdrawn from Serapeum, upon relief by the 1/8th Hants, on August 25th, and was back at Shallufa the same day. "C" and "D" Companies were sent to Manchester Post and the remainder took over Shallufa Post from the 1/10th Londons. The Battalion was at Shallufa East through September and October. There was an outbreak of diphtheria, which caused Manchester Post to be put into quarantine. A draft of three officers and 150 other ranks, which had been guarding prisoners at Esh Shatt, rejoined on September 19th. Battalion training was undertaken and Major Wells was for a short time sent to command the 1/7th at Ashton Post. November opened with the Battalion still at Shallufa East, practising night attack and taking up an outpost line in the desert. There was much route marching and then in the middle of the month came definite orders for the long expected move. The Battalion moved to Ferdan, north of Ismailia, on November 15th, where posts were taken over from the 6th and 7th Royal Welch Fusiliers, and there the 4th Essex remained until the end of the year. There were nine posts, of which the Battalion held one to three. On November 28th Lieut.-Colonel Jameson also took over command of Ferdan railroad and front line. The Battalion was inspected by the Brigadier on December 16th, the men carrying packs containing a blanket in place of great coats, waterproof sheet folded on top, together with the entrenching tool, the helve of which was placed under the flap of the pack. When the helve was carried in the scabbard it was found to be in the way of the men whilst marching. On Christmas Eve the effective strength was 32 officers and 869 other ranks and on Christmas Day sports were held by the Y.M.C.A. for the garrison. The Battalion was inoculated against enteric before it was moved to Ferdan bridgehead and thence to Moasear, which was reached on January 10th, 1917. Route marches, from ten to fourteen miles, and night operations were actively undertaken and then on January 31st the Battalion, with the rest of the Brigade, left Moasear by road for Romani, halting for the night at Ferdan West. The Desert March had commenced.

5th The 1/5th Essex moved from Mex Camp on December 28th and took over the blockhouse at El Hammam from the New Zealanders and the 2/7th Middlesex Regiment. Two officers (Captain Colvin and Lieut. Seragg) and 80 men were detailed as convoys to the armoured train and they were engaged upon this duty some time after the Battalion had left for the Canal Zone, for they did not rejoin until May 15th, 1916. The explanation was that when the 5th Essex moved to the Canal the armoured train was transferred to Upper Egypt, patrolling between Asyut and Luxor. The Battalion was at El Hammam all the month of



On the Canal : Bomb Throwers' School.

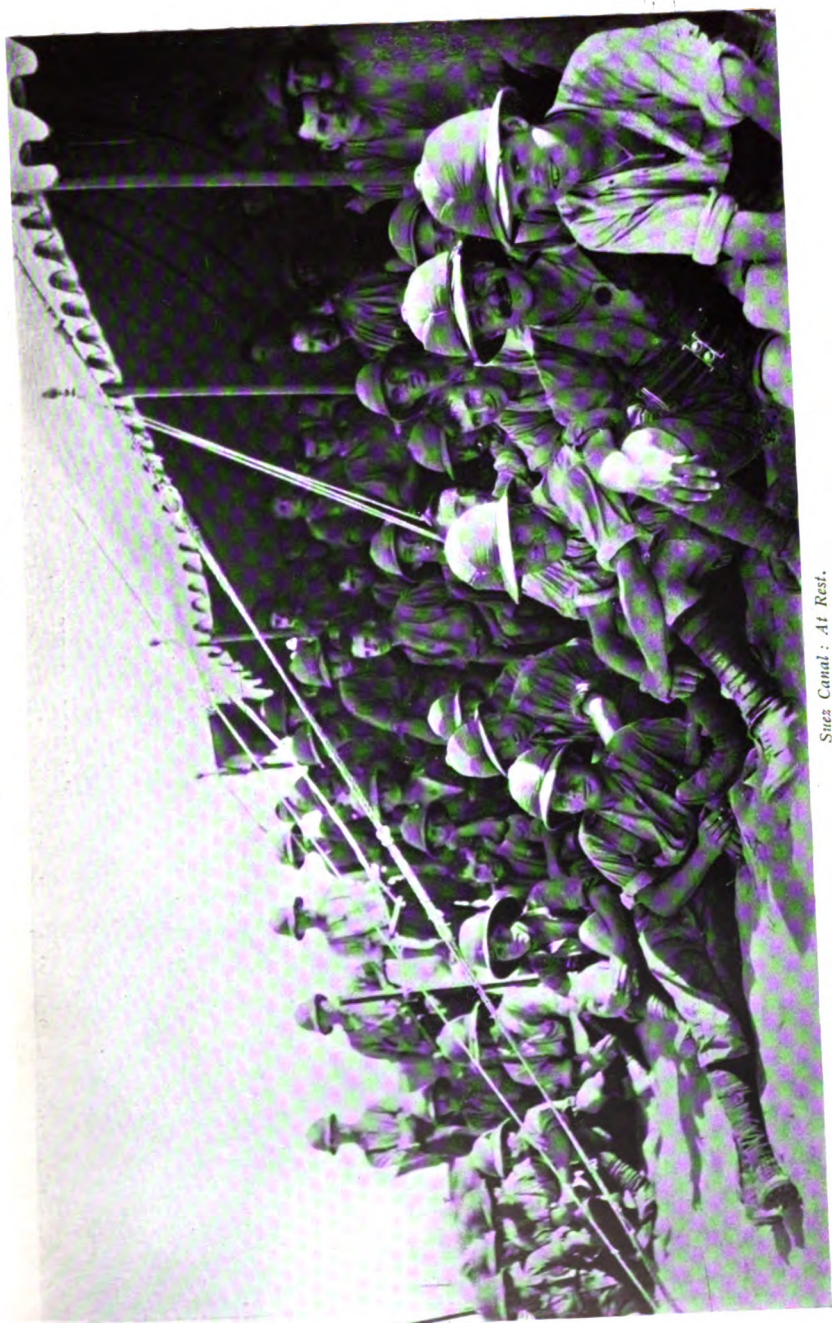


On the Canal : Pay Day.

January, 1916, improving wonderfully in the fresh and bracing air, albeit it was hot in the middle of the day. The railway was washed away for about a mile by a heavy storm in the vicinity of Amriya on January 4th, and for a time the reserve rations had to be used. However, fresh stores were manhandled over the gap to the armoured train next day and thus distributed. The railway was reopened on January 7th. Captain Mavor returned to the Battalion on January 9th after acting as temporary M.L.O. during the evacuation of Anzac, and was thus one of the last to leave the Peninsula. A squadron of Herts Yeomanry arrived on January 10th, upon which day also the second aeroplane attached to the station made its trial flight. The protection of the aircraft hangars also fell to "D" Company, whilst "A" and "B" alternately took outpost duty round about the blockhouse. Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, two officers and 50 rank and file, with R.A.M.C. detachment, marched on January 12th in support of a squadron of the Herts Yeomanry which had proceeded to Zawiet Sidi Abd el Ati, where intelligence had been received that the enemy had gathered to a strength of 1,200. They soon dispersed, however, and so after reading and posting a proclamation the whole force returned to camp at 4 p.m. Aeroplanes were active, reconnaissances being conducted eighty miles into the desert. Upon January 21st there was an air visitor direct from Cairo. One pilot dropped three or four bombs on a Bedouin encampment, whilst on January 29th another aeroplane flew to Daba, thence towards Matruh, returned to Daba, reconnoitred the land south of Maghara and then back to Hammam, covering 450 miles in six hours. The Herts Yeomanry paid a visit to a Bedouin encampment at Mersa Matruh on January 17th and found the southern end of the village enclosed by wire. Upon the same day the Herts were replaced by a squadron of Dorsets. The weather was wet and stormy for several days towards the end of January, during which various tactical points were enclosed with wire entanglements, including the market. The Dorsets left Hammam for Matruh on January 26th and afterwards played a gallant part in the battle of Sollum, which ended the Senussi menace and enabled the General Staff to concern themselves solely with the eastern campaign. Eleven officers and 17 men joined the Battalion on the last day of the month. The 1/5th were also at Hammam for February, when the defence system was divided into four sections, each held by a company. A squadron of the Duke of Lancaster's Yeomanry arrived on February 4th and the next day the Bikanir Camel Corps, with an Egyptian machine gun section, mounted on camels, came in, having trekked from Sir Hooker via Zawiet Sidi Abd el Ati. Their departure on February 11th for Maghara was attended by tragedy, for an aeroplane which was reconnoitring for them crashed from 2,000ft. and Lieut. Yates, the pilot, and Lieut. Hakewell, observer, were killed. The expedition was abandoned and the Camel Corps returned to Hammam the next

day. A draft of an officer and 51 rank and file, with eight Stokes guns, reported on February 10th. Information was received that fifty laden camels had left Alexandria and were travelling west on the north side of the line in an effort to reach the enemy. "A" Company were at once sent to patrol Salt Lake, with their left in touch with the Yeomanry, who extended the line to the sea. Nothing was ever seen of the phantom convoy. Captain Wilson and a party of fifty were sent to Ruweisat to improve the old Khedivial road so that armoured cars could travel from Hammam to Daba. Four miles were rapidly cleared and on February 15th they had completed their task beyond Omeiyid. There was a route march to the sea on February 16th, when wreckage was collected for firewood and three days later Captain E. D. H. Willmott, with a detachment, took over the post at El Ruweisat from the 1/4th. Training was actively proceeded with and a musketry range constructed, upon which firing commenced on February 28th. Captain Deakin, with a party of 20 other ranks, and Sergeant Lee, 1/6th, as sniper, entrained for El Alamein, whence they marched fifteen miles south to catch Bedouins conveying merchandise westward. Eight days' rations were taken and each man carried 120 rounds of small arms ammunition, with a further 100 per man in reserve. At El Alamein they were joined by two light armoured cars from Daba. The whole were under the command of Bramley Bey.

The Battalion entrained for Mena Camp, Cairo, on March 5th and picked up the 1/6th at Ikingi Mariut and Amriya. From Abu Ela station the Battalion marched ten miles to camp, which was reached in the early hours of March 6th. There, after three weeks' stay in the shadow of the Pyramids, the Battalion left for Shallufa, which was reached on March 31st, and a bivouac was formed on the eastern bank of the Canal. On April 1st Manchester Post was taken over from the 1/8th Lancashire Fusiliers, and the weather being much hotter than on the north coast, the men exchanged service dress for khaki drill. Four Lewis guns arrived on April 8th and instruction commenced under 2nd Lieut. Maxwell Browne. On the 14th Lieut. T. H. O. Capron, adjutant, was gazetted to the Regular Army. Lieut. W. H. Brooks, 2nd Lieut. Coleman and the Battalion machine gunners left on April 22nd to join the Machine Gun Company, which formed at Shallufa next day, and on May 2nd Major G. G. Ewer, 1/7th, took temporary command during Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons' absence on leave in England. Major-General S. W. Hare, who had just been appointed to the divisional command, made his first visit on May 5th. The Stokes Gun Battery, 45 strong, under Captain Yonge, which had left for Ismailia on April 11th, rejoined on May 15th and were taken on the Brigade strength. Relieved by the 1/7th Essex, the Battalion moved to Shallufa East, where four officers and 169 men of the 1/4th were attached for a short time. The 1/5th Suffolks were replaced, on May 26th, at Oldham and Salford Posts, Major Wilson being in command at the former,



Suez Canal : At Rest.



115th ESSEX OFFICERS.

Front Row (left to right) : Lieut. Brooks, Lieut. Rubens, Lieut. Brown, Lieut. Proud, Lieut. Wilson, Lieut. Coleman, Middle Row (from left to right) : Lieut. Chester, Lieut. Capron, Col. Gibbons, Lieut. Nobbs, Lieut. Thompson, Lieut. Calverley, Back Row (left to right) : Lieut. Bateman, Lieut. Scruggs, Lieut. Compton.

with "B" and "D" Companies. Salford Post was about six miles east of Geneffe, and Oldham two and a half miles north north-west of Salford. There was much digging to be done and on May 27th the 1/6th Manchesters (438) reported for that duty. In addition, the garrison of the post also comprised a section of R.E. and another of Field Artillery. Two companies of the 8th Manchesters also reported at Oldham. An officers' patrol visited Wigan Post on May 30th, which had been evacuated on May 24th, and reported that the huts and wire, with a large quantity of tables and tanks, were still intact. On June 1st the Brigadier, with C.R.E. 54th Division, paid a visit to Salford Post, when it was decided not to dig trenches all round the post, but to make five strong posts, each complete, with communication trenches to a central post, where the water, rations and reserve would be kept. The heat was intense and on June 5th 115 degrees in the shade were reported at Salford. Captain Bacon, two officers and a draft of 156 other ranks reported on June 14th, of whom half were sent to Salford and the remainder to Oldham. They included fifty per cent. of former members of the Battalion who had been invalided to England with dysentery. Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons returned on June 12th and took over command and, appropriately enough, a day or two later, the news came that this gallant officer had been awarded the D.S.O. Another draft of 286 from the 3/5th, under Captain Taylor, joined on June 20th from England, when 171 went to Salford and the rest to Oldham. The weather about this time was hot and damp, with a heavy wind. The draft found the conditions most trying. They had left the train at Shallufa and journeyed to the railhead by light railway, where they waited for some hours until the cool of the evening. It was a miserable time and had it not been for the canteen established by Padre Bond at the railhead many of the men would have collapsed. When the draft arrived at the respective posts at night they were much cheered to find their comrades in excellent form. All ranks were under canvas, with matting huts for dining, stores, canteen and orderly rooms. The water, at this time, was carried up in fanatis, copper or tin containers, holding about 15 gallons each, each camel taking two. It was essential for the water officer to see that the general store of water for daily use was replenished and also that the reserve supplies in tanks in various parts of the post were maintained. On June 28th water was laid on by means of a pipe line and thus a considerable source of anxiety was removed. Captain Yonge and half a battery of Stokes gunners left for Salonika on June 26th. Then, on July 3rd, two companies went back from Oldham to Geneffe East after relief by 1/6th, and were joined on July 5th by headquarters and the remaining companies. Colonel Gibbons was placed in command of the garrison, which included a battery of Norfolk Artillery, the Middlesex Hussars, R.E. Company, 9th Imperial Camel Corps, a transport Camel Corps, R.A.M.C. and other details. Five picquets

were maintained at night, with listening posts two hundred to three hundred yards in front of them. There was welcome diversion at Geneffe in the form of a cinema entertainment provided by the Y.M.C.A. The Lewis gun section ceased to function as a headquarters unit and one gun was sent to each company. Patrolling between Geneffe and Kabrit was frequent and on July 16th a Y.M.C.A. tent was officially opened by Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, at which Lord Radstock gave an address. Major Heron rejoined with a draft of 103 other ranks, and that officer thereupon became second-in-command of the Battalion. Some of the draft were very new to it and had seen little service. It was reported that one of them, who hailed from Dunmow, was on outpost duty at Coppinger Hill, so named after Major Coppinger Hill, of the Suffolks. Captain Bacon was visiting the posts by night. "Halt! Hands up!" shouted the sentry. The captain put his hands up and stayed in that position for about three minutes. "Good heavens, man," he called, "are you going to keep me like this all night?" "Woi," said the sentry in broadest Essex, "If that aren't Captain Bacon. Advance and be recognized." A tale of a later date concerns the eve of the battle of Gaza. Colonel Gibbons inspected a newly arrived draft, after a hot, tiring march. He asked them if they did not feel hot, to which one of them replied, "Yes, I do, Colonel, and I could do with some of your ale just now." Orders came, on July 28th, to move to Ballah. The 1/7th were across and entraining at Shallufa siding as the first two companies of the 1/5th reached the eastern bank from Geneffe. The Battalion, of the strength of 26 officers and 841 other ranks, left Shallufa at 7.45 p.m. and arrived soon after midnight. Two officers and 91 other ranks of "A" Company were immediately sent north of Ballah to No. 104 Post on the eastern bank of the Canal, midway between Ballah and Qantara, whilst the rest of the Battalion marched across the pontoon bridge to Ballah East to take over the bridgehead defences. Later the same day a strong detachment from "C" Company was sent up to Ballybunion Camp to strengthen the 1/7th and the garrison at No. 104 Post was reduced by 37 men, who were also despatched to Ballybunion on the 30th. Great activity reigned everywhere and in twenty-four hours 120 messages passed through Battalion headquarters. Major Heron, with other officers, moved to Ballah West on July 30th and took over the duties of camp commandant, so that only the commanding officer, with the adjutant, three subalterns, signalling and transport officers were left at Ballah East headquarters. The remainder of "C" Company left for Ballybunion on August 1st and a draft of 1/7th took over all guards and police duties at Ballah bridgehead. On August 5th came news of the victory over the Turks at Romani and the next day several trainloads of Turkish prisoners came through Ballah from Qantara on their way to Cairo. A welcome and thoughtful gift of a gramophone was received on August

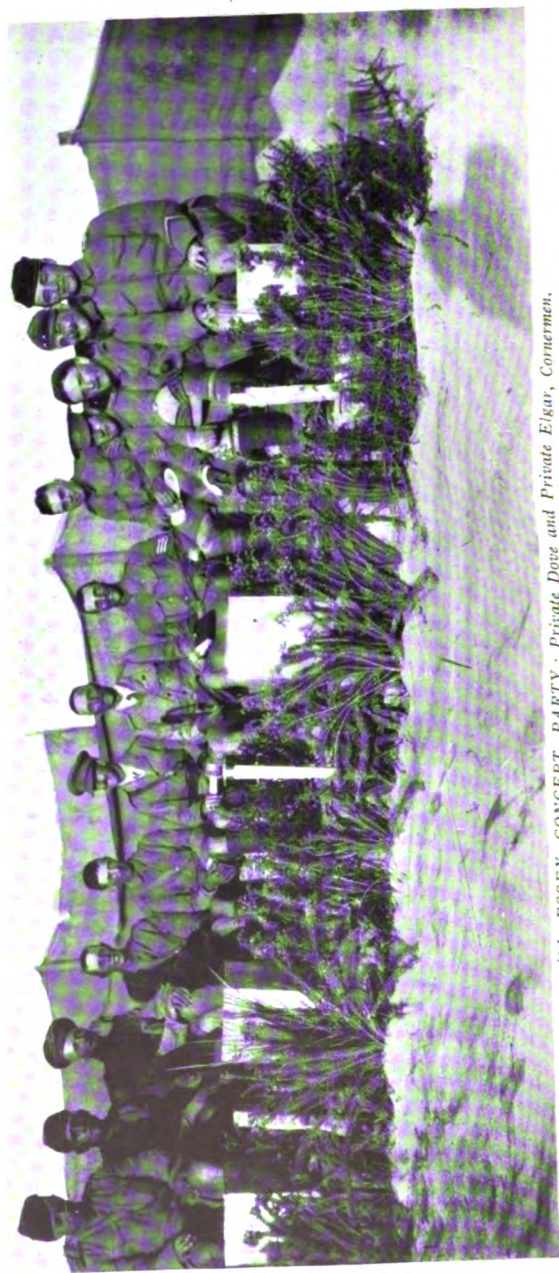
7th from the people of Little Waltham, accompanied by a kindly letter from the former commanding officer of the Battalion, Colonel Neville Tufnell. August 14th, the anniversary of the advance of the 161st Brigade across Anafarta Plain, was celebrated as a holiday, with land sports in the morning and aquatic sports in the afternoon. An outbreak of cholera among Turkish prisoners brought into Qantara caused the issue of a special order by which none were allowed to cross the Canal except with a pass, though the prohibition did not apply to people coming over with supplies. The 2/10th Middlesex relieved the 1/5th on August 23rd. The latter, with the 1/7th from Ballyunion, then crossed to the west bank of the Canal, but were much delayed owing to the breaking of the ferry chain. Battalion drill the next day came as something fresh to many of all ranks, because the unit had been so distributed on detachment duty that this form of training had not been possible. In the evening of August 25th the Battalion entrained for Shallufa in no very cheerful frame of mind. Destination was reached in the early morning of August 26th and orders came for Salford and Oldham Posts. "A rotten journey," wrote one. "A miserable business being turned out of a train in the dark at 1 a.m. and then told a long desert march lies before you. The taking over from the Londons at Oldham occupied practically all day and all ranks had to sit about in the sand for hours before they were able to get into the tents and settle down." The march was undertaken in good spirit, however, and although the men appeared tired at first they soon pulled themselves together and stepped out well. Just before reaching the railhead a welcome drink of tea was provided from a field kitchen. "B" and "D" Companies took over at Oldham from the 11th Londons and "A" and "C" Companies at Salford from the 5th Bedfords. When Brig.-General Marriott-Dodington went on leave on September 5th, Colonel Gibbons was placed in temporary command of the Brigade, though retaining control of the 1/5th. He occupied the position until General Dodington's return on October 7th. In perceptibly cooler weather and longer nights, which made everyone more fit and lively, there was much instruction in attack, all the battalions of the Brigade being employed thereon. When the garrison at Oldham "attacked" Ashton they were pleased with the change, because it allowed them to see another desert post and also to note the rather fine view from it of the Suez Canal, for it stood higher than Oldham. A small draft of 23 reported on September 26th and another of 24 on November 6th, all but one of the latter being trained signallers. The Battalion moved to Ferry Post, Ismailia, on November 16th. Headquarters and two companies took over Ferry Post bridgehead, whilst the other two companies, less two platoons, were with the 1/6th Essex at Ferry Post railhead. The remaining two platoons occupied Bench Mark and Ridge Post, about two miles north of Ferry Post. This was a much

more interesting station, for the desert was undulating and there was also the constant movement of infantry, cavalry, engineers, transport and much else. The post was elaborately constructed and in a much more finished state than others which had been occupied. At the end of November Round Hill posts were occupied in relief of the 1/5th Suffolks. The weather was delightful. On December 30th Ferry Post railhead and the whole of the front line were taken over from the 1/6th and 1/7th and then on January 10th, 1917, the Battalion left for Moascar, where the 161st Brigade was concentrating. On January 31st the march by road to Romani was commenced, with El Ferdan as the first stopping place. Although the journey was a little trying at times, all ranks were in high spirits, as the change from the monotony of a desert post was much appreciated.

6th Major C. R. Roberts West took over temporary command of 1/6th Essex at Mex Camp and superintended the transfer of the Battalion on December 28th to the Daba line. Headquarters were at Amriya and the distance between the first detachment at Sidi Mergheb and the last at Ghirbaniyat was about thirty miles, connected by a railway service which consisted of one passenger train daily up and down. The following were the posts held by detachments: Sidi Mergheb, 2 officers and 48 other ranks; Abd el Kadir, 1 and 26; Amriya, 5 and 145; Ikingi Mariut, 1 and 27; Hauwariya, 2 and 48; Bahig, 2 and 52; El Ghirbaniyat, 2 and 23; Alexandria, 1 and 11; a total of 16 officers and 380 other ranks. There was a welcome improvement in the physical condition of the men and transfers to hospital considerably diminished. Heavy rainstorms washed away about 15 yards of railway embankment on January 4th, 1916, and the safety of the track was endangered for about a mile. The water was drained off by digging trenches across the fields. Some of the men were employed upon this work and some in unloading ballast trains. The supply of provisions was interrupted and for a short time the reserve rations were used. Later the train ran the foodstuffs to the break, whence they were transported across the gap to the armoured train waiting on the other side. An irregular service was commenced on January 8th. Next day Lieut.-Colonel Delamare took over command, but he did not stay long, for on January 25th he was transferred to the 1/7th and Lieut.-Colonel W. J. Bowker, D.S.O., took his place in the 6th. The Battalion remained at its posts on the railway for the whole of February, during which time seven officers and 55 other ranks joined from England. The duty of the Western Frontier Force was that of protecting lines of communication. It was anything but exciting. "When I rejoined the Battalion in February, 1916," wrote Lieut. C. W. Silverwood, "I found the Brigade dispersed among various stations on the railway line from Alexandria to Daba. I was at once dispatched to a post called Ghirbaniyat, with instructions to improve the fortifications as far as possible with the material to hand. I



*16th ESSEX HEADQUARTERS OFFICERS.
Left to right: Lieut. Clark, Adjutant, Lieut. Collin, Lieut.-Col. Delamare, Lieut. Proud, R.A.M.C., Lieut. Mitchell, Machine Gun Officer.*



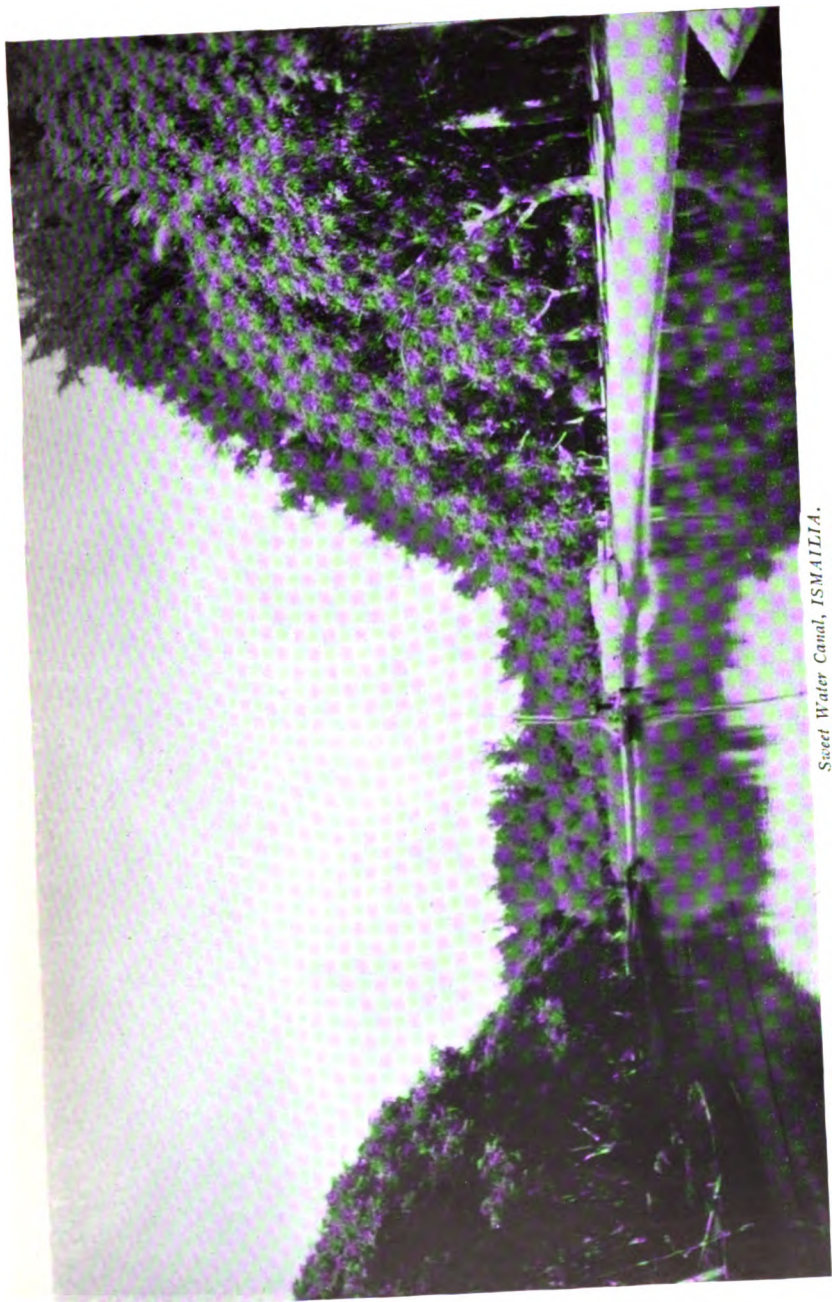
116th ESSEX CONCERT PARTY : Private Doe and Private Elgar, Cornermen.

was also informed, perhaps to ensure that there would be no doubt that the post would be made as secure as possible, that some two miles south of the station was a large encampment of natives, mostly of one tribe, numbering about 2,000, and that it was not known for certain whether they were friendly towards us or had leanings to the Senussi, or whether they were merely sitting on the fence waiting to see which side to join for their own particular benefit. The effect of this uncertainty was extremely good for the development of the defences, which were continually being improved until we left on March 5th. The post was surrounded by a system of redoubts, with the station in the middle, and arranged so that any section could be rapidly reinforced if hard pressed. However, there was no excitement and little of real interest to occupy the mind. Every week there was a native market close to the perimeter, which was closed down sharp at noon. A few miles north of the spot were some fine remains of a Roman coastal station, with the old lighthouse still towering about the surrounding buildings, while to the south, two or three miles beyond the Arab encampment above mentioned, were some most interesting ruins of a temple, chiefly in marble and alabaster. When visiting these ruins on one occasion I made a courtesy call on the chief of the tribe who were so uncomfortably near to us. I requested him to furnish a guide to take us to the ruins. This he most willingly did and we found ourselves in the charge of a most villainous looking ruffian, armed to the teeth with pistols and daggers and an immense spear. The only really dangerous weapons were the daggers. On our return I wished to thank the chief for his courtesy in sending the guide, which I attempted to do in my best Arabic, of which I knew no more than two or three words. However, I knew the word for 'I am much obliged' or 'Thank you very much.' I was a little surprised, after saying my one word speech, to notice that the chief did not appear to be as gracious as one would expect. It transpired the next morning that he had been very much offended, and, no wonder, for I had used the wrong word and instead of thanking him politely, as I thought, I had most unfortunately called him 'imbecile.' The post interpreter was immediately sent, with escort, to explain matters and to offer deep apologies and to invite the chief to take tea with the officers at the station in the course of a day or so. I was relieved when the invitation was accepted. The chief and his second-in-command were fine looking men of about 60 and as guests were quite entertaining. All conversation was done through the interpreter." On March 5th a move was made to Mena Camp, Cairo, and thence, on March 31st, to Shallufa, Suez Canal. When stationed by the Canal bathing was the principal recreation, though football and cricket matches were also organized. Concerts and boxing matches were held on Saturday evenings. The former were of first-rate quality, for the Battalion had a real comedian in Duff. Wigan Post was occupied on April 1st and

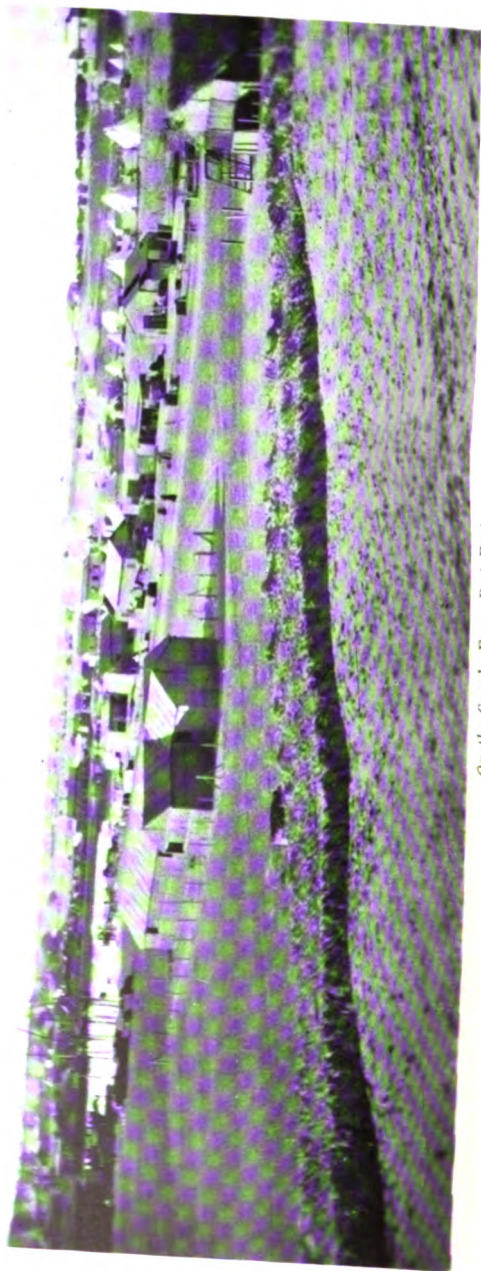
the Battalion was placed in quarantine from the 7th to the 27th because of two cases of smallpox. A draft of eight officers and 96 other ranks reported. A number of men were affected by the Khamsin on May 16th and 17th—it was 133° in the tents at 11 a.m.—but as the heat moderated on the following days the effects were not serious. Upon May 19th the Battalion was relieved by the 1/4th and moved to Geneffe from Shallufa on May 27th, in the place of the 1/5th Norfolks. During May three officers and 110 other ranks were admitted to hospital and the reinforcements included three officers and 81 other ranks. Major Walker, Lieutenants J. E. Reid and F. L. Darlington, with 33 others, were formally transferred on May 19th to the newly formed 161st Brigade Machine Gun Company, to which they had been already attached, and on the last day of the month 2nd Lieutenants C. W. B. Adams and A. Fowler Newsam, with seven others, were attached to No. 7 Company, Imperial Camel Corps. During June all available men were employed upon the defences at Geneffe Post, whilst “B” Company, made up to a strength of five officers and 150 other ranks from “D” Company, garrisoned North Kabrit. A detachment of eight men at Geneffe Gare was relieved every 24 hours and another of seven rifles at Kabrit South-West was changed weekly. An officer and 53 other ranks were admitted to hospital and a draft of four officers and 73 other ranks was received. Kabrit North was a most delightful post after the deadly monotony and heat of the other desert posts. It was situated almost at the junction of Great and Little Bitter Lakes and had a most delightfully sandy, shelving beach, making for perfect bathing. While there (about a month) all non-swimmers were taught the rudiments of the art and became reasonably efficient. “Attached to the camp,” wrote an officer, “was a section of the Bikanir Camel Corps under an Indian N.C.O. Every day a patrol had to be taken out by an officer. Three camels were used, the leader carrying an Indian N.C.O., the centre one the white officer and the last two native troopers. The natives could not understand English, none of us could speak whatever language Bikanirs talk, and none of the officers knew the first thing about riding a camel, so it became obvious after a short time that the Indians were enjoying the patrols considerably more than were their white officers. They went out some miles into the desert, which hereabouts was of the hard stony variety, and returned by a different route, the object being to look for tracks or any signs of enemy movement. The duration of a patrol was three or four hours and the distance covered varied from ten to twenty miles. It took about two days for the white officers to recover from the shakings and the soreness occasioned by this unaccustomed riding. It was very pleasant to have the Navy, represented by a monitor, lying just off the post. We got to know the Navy well, and we appreciated the luxury of going on board and lounging in civilized surroundings and hearing

ice in the glasses. About once a week sports were arranged and were entered into with great gusto by both the troops and the sailors. It was remarkable that the Navy almost invariably carried off most of the shore events, while we usually won the aquatic items. Once or twice a week the monitor sent ashore sufficient fish, caught the night before, to provide a breakfast for all. This change in diet was welcomed by us all more than the Navy ever knew. The lakes swarmed with fish and the sailors caught them in nets let down over the side, at night, with a powerful light beam directed on to that piece of water where the fish were desired to come. One was struck with the gorgeous sunsets which were to be seen from the camp. To the west, in the far distance, were mountainous hills, which shimmered in the heat all day, but which at sunset, when the heat was becoming more bearable, took on all the colours of the rainbow and then gradually turned a deeper and deeper purple until at length they became black and streamers of gold flooded the sky from behind them. Slowly and then faster and faster the gold turned to a limpid yellow and, finally, to light green. Then, quite suddenly, to the deep blue of the tropic night, all studded with stars." Early in July the Battalion moved to Salford and Oldham Posts in exchange with the 1/5th Essex. Headquarters and "A" and "B" Companies went to the former and Major Alexander and "C" and "D" Companies to Oldham, with the Quartermaster and staff at Geneffe Railhead and the transport section at Shallufa West. Two officers and 110 other ranks arrived from England on July 22nd, but had a month's acclimatization on the Canal Bank before being sent on to the Posts. Eventually the two officers (Lieut. W. F. Cook and Lieut. R. E. Cook) were sent to Esh Shatt in charge of the prisoners of war camp in the desert opposite Suez. They had to supervise their removal to Cairo in special trains. The majority of the prisoners were sick with dysentery and fever and it was a relief when the last prisoner was handed over at Cairo, where better accommodation was available. The month was spent in patrols and the construction of defences in fine weather. An officer and 69 other ranks were sent to hospital, a number of them with septic sores. On August 4th and 5th the Battalion concentrated at Shallufa and proceeded to Ferry Post railhead, where "A" and "B" Companies (Major Alexander) remained and "C" and "D" Companies and Battalion headquarters marched to relieve the 2/4th Royal West Surreys at a line of desert posts. "C" Company, with headquarters, took over Kembla, and "D" Company Gundagai, whilst a detachment of "C" Company was also sent to Katoomba III. A guard of a sergeant and six men, with a corporal of R.A.M.C., were left at the pipe head (Duntroon) to supervise the water supply. On August 25th the Battalion was relieved by the 1st Herefords and after concentration at Moascar proceeded to Shallufa, whence the 6th Essex marched to Geneffe. "A" Company and a few of "C" Company (eight

officers and 160 other ranks in all) were sent to Kabrit North and a guard of a sergeant and four men took over Kabrit South West. Three officers and 125 other ranks were admitted to hospital during August and four officers and 154 others were taken on the strength. Two officers and 230 other ranks joined on September 18th after duty at the Prisoners of War Camp at Esh Shatt; seven officers and 158 other ranks spent a week at a change-of-air camp at Sidi Bishr, whilst various courses were also attended at the Imperial School of Instruction, Zeitun. There was a slight outbreak of diphtheria. Four officers and 65 other ranks were admitted to the hospital during September and the reinforcements comprised an officer and 17 other ranks. Major Alexander assumed temporary command of the Battalion on October 19th, when Lieut.-Colonel Bowker went on leave to England. Training and digging were varied by the visit for a week of 16 officers and 289 other ranks to the change-of air camp. An officer and 81 other ranks went to hospital. On November 4th the Battalion was moved to Ashton Post and Geneffe Railhead and eleven days later concentrated at Shallufa. On November 16th it entrained for Moascar. "C" and "D" Companies went to Ferry Post Railhead to take over the front line posts. "D" Company (three platoons) was at Gundagai, the other platoon being with "C" Company at Kembla. The latter company had a platoon each at Katoomba I and II, and a water guard at Duntroon. "A" and "B" Companies, with Battalion headquarters, formed the mobile reserve for the front line at Ferry Post Railhead. During the month one officer and 48 other ranks were transferred to hospital. War at this period seemed very remote. There was no definite idea as to the Turkish positions, except that they were somewhere in front, to the east of the Canal, but whether the enemy was within ten miles or fifty miles the men knew not. They were fully aware, however, that the Turk was quite likely to pay a surprise visit if he should think an opportunity presented itself. Duty was very routine and boring, and anything out of the ordinary was most welcome as a relief from monotony. "Some time before Christmas, 1916," wrote Lieut. C. W. Silverwood, "which my platoon spent at the tiny first line post of Katoomba II, one of the men, Private Baker, a most amusing and mischievous Cockney, asked permission for the platoon to produce a play at Christmas. On enquiry I was informed that the name of the play and the subject matter were absolute secrets and were not to be divulged even to the officer commanding the post. He did tell me, however, that he was the author. On receiving his assurance that nothing in the play would offend discipline, I gave the necessary permission for the play to proceed to rehearsal. We were fortunate enough to obtain the good services of the Engineers in the construction of a small stage in the mess hut at the post, and the lighting was procured from a few hurricane lamps purchased from Ferry Post. The play turned out to be



Sweet Water Canal, ISMAILIA.



On the Canal: Ferry Post East.

a very clever skit on Army life in general and life in our own Battalion in particular. No officer in the Battalion escaped caricature, but it was all most pleasantly done and no offence could possibly be taken. Later, when the play was produced at Moascar before the Brigade, I must say I felt exceptionally embarrassed, when, sitting next to the C.O., I found that that part of the text which related to his idiosyncrasies had been re-written and was much more biting than on the first performance." In the middle of December the G.O.C. Southern Canal Section (Major-General S. W. Hare) inspected the Battalion and declared himself very well satisfied. "In those Duntroon days," wrote an officer, "we were exceedingly healthy. The training was hard. Twice a week every man had to do his twelve miles route march across the desert and any man falling out or missing his turn had to make up for it on Saturday afternoon. Drill and musketry, such as it was on the heavy sand, was good, but as the sand made distance judging hard, many of us were deceived and often found ourselves farther from the post than we thought." During the latter half of December material was salvaged from the disused Australian works. In one case 11,000 sandbags were collected in three hours. On December 30th the Battalion was at Ferry Post bridgehead, in the vicinity of Moascar. The camp was on the east bank of the Canal overlooking Lake Timsah. "We often had most gorgeous sunsets and it was very pleasant to watch the ships passing through the Canal, which meant in most cases that a mail had arrived. Ships with coolies aboard and troops on leave from Mesopotamia were a great contrast to the monotony of the previous months spent in the desert. We often made up a party to go to Ismailia, where we could at least have a dinner at the club and where we could buy several useful articles at an exorbitant cost." An officer and 52 other ranks were admitted to hospital. The 1/6th were sent to Moascar Camp on January 9th, 1917, where the 54th Division had concentrated and rigorous training ensued for the rest of the month. On the last day of January the Battalion accomplished the first stage on its long trek to Palestine, marching ten miles to El Ferdan. "I shall never forget the first day's march to El Ferdan," wrote the Transport Officer. "A Khamsin wind was blowing from the south-west. Marching on the hard road beside the Canal caused sore feet at an early stage. The transport was carrying full load and the new mules occasionally objected to the misfit of their pack saddlery and after dumping their loads they would hurry off to another unit. We had to await arrival at El Ferdan before we could sort ourselves out. I slept in a G.S. wagon that night and hoped for better things next day. As our extra kit, including several blankets, had been left behind, the night seemed very cold."

7th The 1/7th Essex entrained at Mex Junction for Daba in relief of the New Zealand Rifles on December 28th, and were there throughout the months of January and February, 1916,

with a detachment of two officers and 25 other ranks at El Ghazal. They suffered the temporary dislocation of supplies through the heavy rain, but from January 9th to 31st the Battalion Diary states that there was nothing of importance. The camp, which had been pitched at the railway station, was removed to a site about 800 yards north of the coastguard station on February 16th and five days later a detachment of six officers and 95 other ranks was sent to Matruh as escort to a convoy. One officer and 35 other ranks joined the Battalion. On March 6th the Battalion, under Lieut.-Colonel L. S. Delamare, arrived at Cairo and marched to Mena, where a draft of ten men reported, together with the convoy escort from Matruh. The 1/7th entrained for Shallufa on March 30th, having been reinforced by further drafts of seven officers and 61 other ranks. The whole of the month of April and the greater part of May were spent at Shallufa East on outpost duty. Reinforcements had been received, numbering four officers and 181 other ranks, ere the Battalion moved, on May 22nd, to Manchester Post in relief of the 1/5th Essex. There it remained the whole of June, steadily increasing in strength, for three officers and 133 other ranks reported for duty. On July 13th the unit was replaced by the 11th Londons and entrained on the 28th for Ballah, whence, next day, it marched to Ballybunion, occupying the outpost line and being engaged upon defensive works. A draft of seven officers and 275 other ranks joined from Ballah bridgehead and on August 23rd the Battalion moved to Ballah West, entraining therefrom, on the 26th, for Shallufa West, where three companies went to Ashton Post and the fourth was stationed at Geneffe Railhead. Lieut.-Colonel L. S. Delamare left on five weeks' leave on October 21st, and for a time Major G. G. Ewer was in command, being succeeded by Major Barrington Wells when he was appointed to the Brigade staff. On November 4th the Battalion was relieved by the 6th Essex and three companies went to Geneffe and the other to Kabrit. Then on November 15th the Battalion was replaced by the 10th Londons and 5th Bedfords, proceeding to Ferdan Bridgehead. Two companies were sent to the Railhead and returned to the Battalion on November 30th. Ferry Post Railhead was occupied on December 1st. The Battalion moved to Ferdan Railhead on January 1st, 1916, and thence to the Bridgehead on January 6th-7th. It was transferred to Moascar Camp on January 9th and the commencement of its great march to Palestine on January 31st is thus laconically recorded in the War Diary: "Battalion proceeded by march route to Ferdan West."

M.G. FORMATION OF THE 161st MACHINE GUN COMPANY.

Machine gun organization was greatly changed whilst the Essex Brigade were on the Canal, as readers will probably have previously noted. The gunners became a separate tactical unit and, as such, their story has an interest of its own. The 161st Machine



Fancy Dress Football on the Desert, N.C.O.'s Team.



Sunset on LAKE TIMSAH.



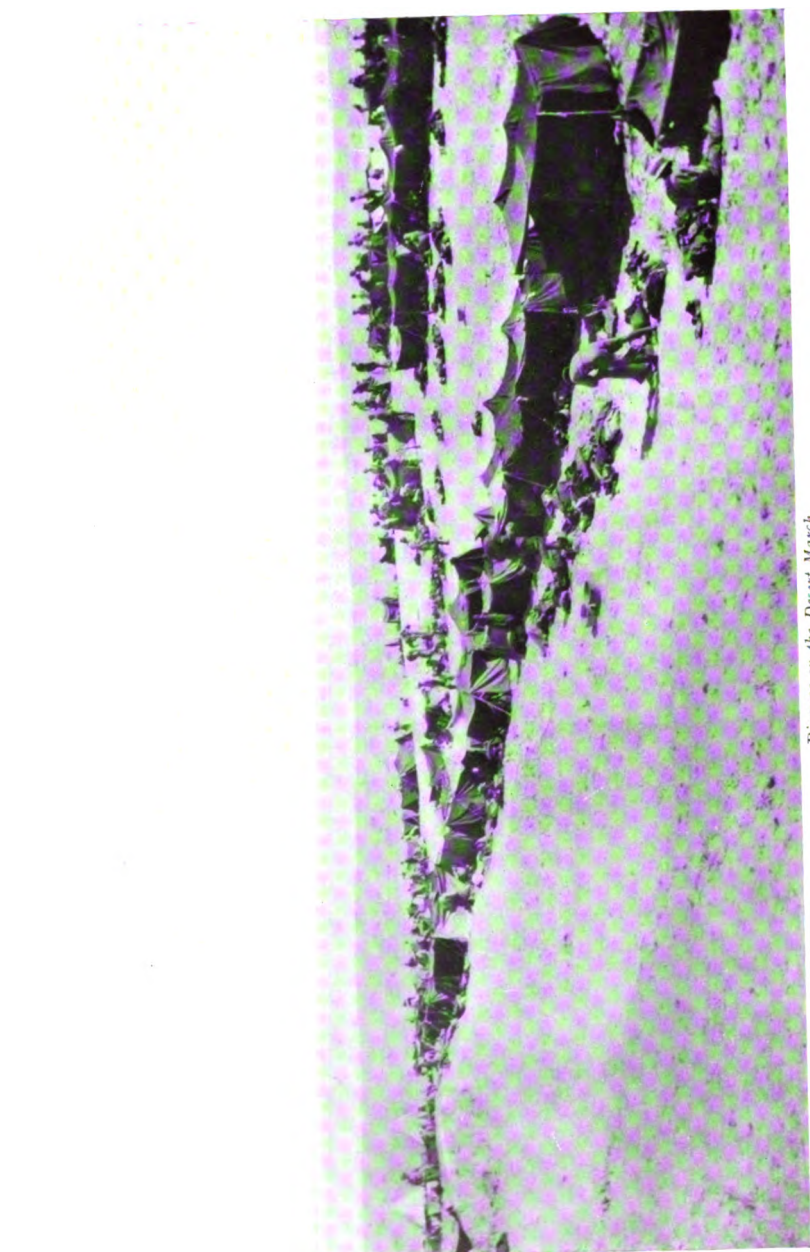
The Sanctuary : Ferry Post, RAILHEAD.



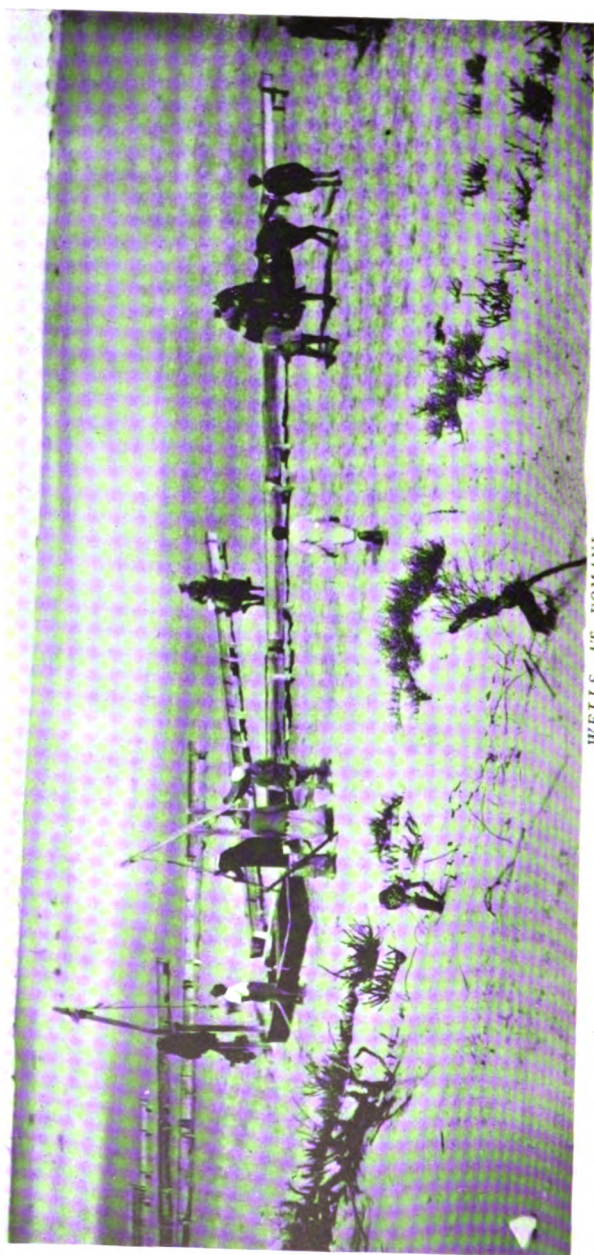
KHATOOMBA II POST, November, 1916.

Gun Company was formed at Shallufa on the Suez Canal on April 22nd, 1916. For this purpose the machine gun detachment was taken from each Battalion of the Brigade. Each Battalion provided two officers and, in addition, the 6th and 5th Essex supplied the commanding officer and second-in-command. The eight guns from the Battalions were supplemented by another eight, making a total of 16. The Company was divided into four sections, each having four guns. Although the Company thus came under the Machine Gun Corps, yet it remained for a very long time composed almost entirely of officers and men of the Essex Territorial Battalions. Upon formation, the section from the 4th Essex was designated No. 1 Section, that from the 5th Essex No. 2 Section, that from 6th Essex No. 3 Section, and that from the 7th Essex No. 4. The officers were as follow : Captain (afterwards Major) J. A. Walker, 6th Essex, Company commander ; Lieutenant (afterwards Captain) W. H. Brooks, 5th Essex, second-in-command ; No. 1 Section, Lieut. S. W. Williams and 2nd Lieut. J. N. Coker, 4th Essex ; No. 2 Section, Lieut. R. H. S. Coleman and 2nd Lieut. A. V. Coates, 5th Essex ; No. 3 Section, Lieut. R. D. F. Wall and 2nd Lieut. J. E. Reid, 6th Essex ; No. 4 Section, Lieut. A. H. F. Harwood and Lieut. C. Needell, 7th Essex. The Company remained with Brigade headquarters at Shallufa for a time in order to organize and then their sections were sent to the various posts in the Canal defences held by the Brigade. There was much preparation and digging of the necessary gun emplacements, and elaborate positions for a machine gun section were constructed at North and South Posts, Shallufa, at the top of the bank of the Suez Canal. The rest of the time was spent in marching and training, route marches being a regular feature. These were very fatiguing owing to the heat and to the soft sand. Bathing in the Suez Canal was a relief and when at Shallufa everybody made a practice of bathing at least once a day. A certain machine gun officer, who was given to habitually wearing field boots, went off to bathe one evening. He left his clothes on the Canal bank and must have put his lighted pipe in his breeches pocket, for when going to dress after a delightful bathe, he found his breeches and shirt burnt. Great was his dismay, but even greater was the amusement, when he walked back to camp, dressed in field boots with spurs, sun helmet and towel round his middle. The weather was exceedingly hot and one day in June in the officers' mess at Manchester the temperature rose to 120°F. Towards the end of July, 1916, rumours of an impending Turkish attack were very prevalent and all four Battalions of the Brigade were liable to move at any moment. No such orders, however, had been issued to the Machine Gun Company, but suddenly, at 3.30 p.m. on July 21st, just as everybody was waking up after the afternoon siesta, the Company was informed that it had to be ready to entrain by 7 p.m. A great hustle followed. The Company had been in the same camp for some months and

officers had with them their base kit, camp beds, etc. Consequently there were considerable accumulations of gear, mess kit and other articles. The surplus had to be packed and dumped, tents pulled down and made ready for removal and so on. However, work as hard as they could and also with the assistance kindly given by the 7th Essex, the Company was not ready by 7 p.m., and so the bridge over the Canal was kept open specially. At last all was in order and the Company crossed the Canal to Shallufa Station, there entraining for Qantara. The transport section had, some days before, by means unknown, possessed themselves of a small donkey, which they insisted upon taking with them and as there was no room for it in the horse trucks, it had to travel all night with the men. "We arrived," wrote Lieut. Clive Needell, "at Qantara Station at about 7.30 a.m. on July 22nd and marched across the Canal, where we eventually encamped just by the railway line. All that day rumours of every kind floated in. Next morning, at 7.15, we left Qantara by train for Romani, where we arrived at about 9 a.m. On arrival there none of the staff seemed to be expecting us, but it subsequently transpired that we had been ordered up to reinforce the line covering Romani, as a Turkish attack was shortly expected. While we were encamping aeroplanes came over and dropped some bombs nearby, but without apparent damage. It was at Romani, where the desert sand was of a much finer quality than that at Shallufa, that we made the acquaintance of sand sledges. These were wooden sledges constructed by the R.E. and drawn by a pair of horses. They worked very satisfactorily on the loose sand. Orders were issued to us allotting a sub-section (two guns) to certain of the posts comprising the Romani defences and during the next day, the 24th, the section officers rode over to the posts assigned to them for reconnaissance purposes. The guns of the Company were allotted as follows: One sub-section (two guns) of No. 4 Section, under Lieut. C. Needell, to No. 11 post on extreme left on sea shore (Mahamdiya); one sub-section of No. 3 Section, under 2nd Lieut. J. E. Reid, to No. 10 post; one sub-section of No. 1 Section (2nd Lieut. J. N. Coker) to No. 5 post; one sub-section of No. 1 Section (Lieut. S. W. Williams) to No. 3 post; one sub-section of No. 2 Section (Sergeant Herbert) to No. 4 post. The infantry garrisons of the posts were drawn from the 52nd Division. Life for the sub-sections was fairly strenuous, for the posts, some in particular, were not even half finished. The infantry in the heat of August in the Sinai desert were busy constructing further essential trenches and completing the wiring, while the machine gunners worked on their emplacements. These latter, however carefully sited, often showed up badly (as was later to be realized!) from the plain to the east, for some of the posts were on rather high ground. Progress was slow, for sand is a most difficult material in which to entrench, but the experience gained in building the works round Shallufa



Bivouac on the Desert March.



WELLS AT ROMANI.

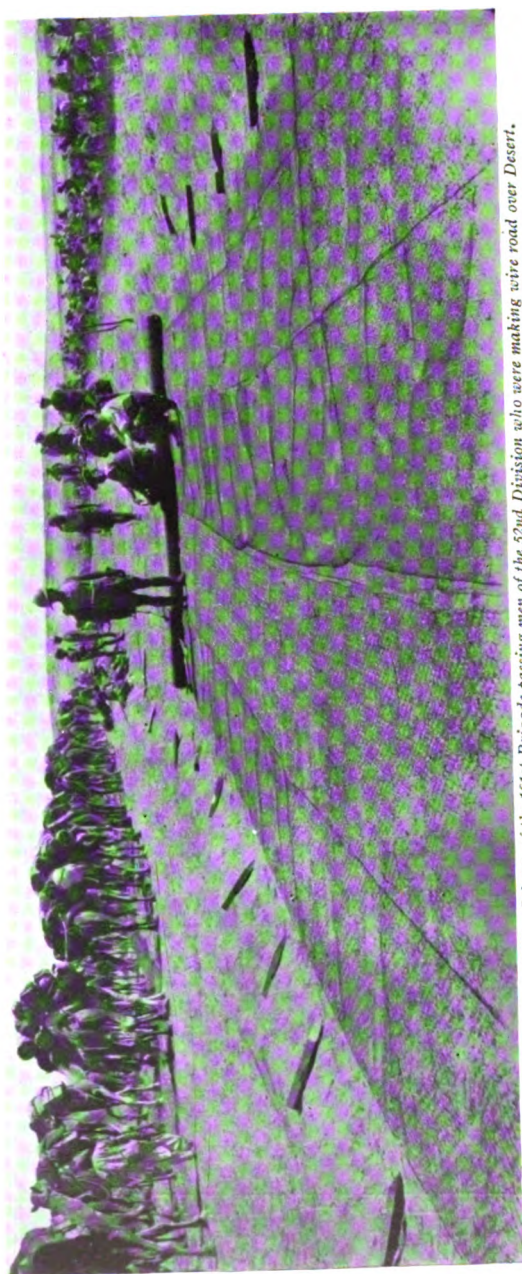
proved most useful. In some posts only the work on the enemy's side had been attempted, so that had a complete break through occurred on the 4th August, things would have been very awkward. Reserve water storage, so essential in the desert, and sanitation work were still under way. On the 29th, at about 7.30 p.m., two British airmen walked into No. 11 post (Mahamdiya) held by the 1/5th H.L.I. They had been shot down by the Turks, had been able to land safely behind the Turkish line and then burn their machine, after which they managed to get through the Turks and arrived safely at No. 11 post—an exciting adventure. We gave them dinner, bed and breakfast next morning and directed them back to Brigade Headquarters—a very gallant couple. Two Turkish soldiers came in to No. 11 post at 6 a.m. on the 30th and gave themselves up. They seemed to be rather badly in need of water. On the 30th the enemy bombed and machine-gunned the railhead and south-eastern posts from the air. On the 1st and again on the 2nd August the two monitors which had arrived off Mahamdiya shelled the Turkish back areas, principally, it was thought, in the direction of Ograhtina."

THE BATTLE OF ROMANI.

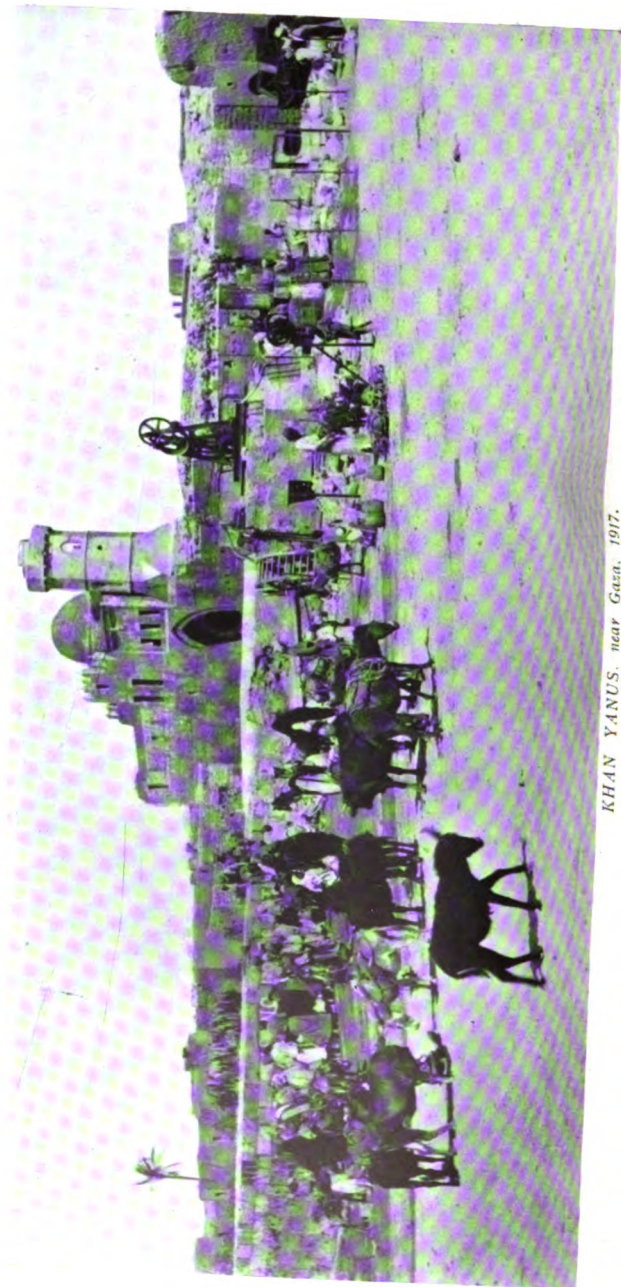
On the night of August 3rd-4th, about midnight, shots were heard approximately in front of Nos. 2 and 3 posts. By dawn a Turkish attack was fairly launched, with its right about opposite No. 6 post and its left away to the south-west, opposite Mount Meredith, the general direction of the advance being north-west. The sub-section of No. 2 Section in No. 4 post had a particularly strenuous time and Sergeant Herbert did some good work by firing into a party of Turks advancing in the dim light of early morning shouting out they were Australians. Apart from the fact that the Anzac troops were mounted, some of the men had had a similar experience on Gallipoli and were not to be taken in. The sub-section of No. 1 Section in No. 3 post (Lieut. S. W. Williams) spent the hours of darkness firing down the wire on their left. Some excitement was caused by the Turks breaking through between No. 3 and No. 2 posts. The sub-section of No. 1 Section in No. 5 post (2nd Lieut. J. N. Coker) found few good targets at first, for the enemy favoured advancing by individual rushes, an excellent idea, for much of the ground was marked by curious mounds about four feet high and just as thick, which afforded perfect cover. Many of these mounds were early occupied by that dangerous individual, the Turkish sniper. The latter soon proved himself as troublesome as ever and made it almost impossible to show a head at all. Eventually the infantry appealed to the machine gunners, who, in some instances, were able to blow the top of the mounds away and, as was found next day, settle the snipers lying behind. This sounds a somewhat expensive procedure as regards ammunition, especially as it was not too plentiful, but it was quite effective. Before 10 a.m. the battle had reached a critical stage, for away

to the west of the line of posts the enemy had forced back the mounted troops and were almost in our rear. But reinforcements from the reserve were coming up and after things had hung in the balance for some hours, 5 p.m. saw the recapture of Mount Royston and the definite failure of the attack.

Opposite the south-eastern posts it had been in the nature of a holding attack, with Nos. 3, 4 and 5 posts (in which were guns of the 161st Machine Gun Company), together with No. 6 post, catching the full effect of very heavy artillery fire and bombing from the air, which, with two $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour breaks, continued from 5 a.m. till 7 p.m., while other shells passed over during the night. This fire, directed largely on the small posts, was very accurate. Nos. 4 and 5 posts, as the Official War Diary confirms, received 169 and 132 shells respectively within small perimeters. In No. 6, which stood out very plainly, the machine gunners suffered very badly, indeed, and during the afternoon Lieut. R. D. F. Wall was ordered to take up the remaining sub-section of No. 3 section and relieve them. The posts from No. 5 westwards had most of the attention of the Turkish infantry and the hostile rifle and gun fire there was considerable. At times the enemy would concentrate heavy fire on one or two posts and there were some remarkable escapes owing largely to wonderful "damping" properties of the sand. In No. 4 post a shell passed across the front of the dug-out in which the machine gun officer was at the moment sitting and burst just round the corner; in No. 5 post a 5.9in. shell burst on the parapet behind a traverse round which the gun team was sitting, six feet from the officer and corporal, with nothing to protect them. The former was completely stunned and the adjoining fire bay was demolished, but not a soul was hurt. After the shelling ceased on the morning of the 5th snipers were again dealt with. The fire from the posts, preventing the surviving enemy from getting away, often aided their capture. By noon the pursuit by our mounted troops was in progress, but though this lasted for three or four days, the battle was over so far as the 161st Company was concerned. Considering the shell-fire experienced, the Company's casualties were very light—two killed, one died of wounds and two wounded, but the losses were the more felt as they were the first in the Division since Gallipoli. The lot of the wounded in the posts, who sometimes had to lie in the trench itself owing to dug-outs not being finished, in the terrific heat, was most unpleasant, but they were remarkably cheerful and from most posts it was found possible to evacuate them at nightfall. The return of the Company to Shallufa from Qantara was probably delayed by the cholera scare. A welcome event before leaving Romani was the receipt of a congratulatory message from H.M. The King, who spoke of the brilliant success won at the height of the hot season. Sergeant Herbert, of No. 2 Section, was subsequently deservedly awarded the D.C.M. His post was very heavily attacked and by the



Nearing Gaza, March, 1917. Column of the 161st Brigade passing men of the 52nd Division who were making wire road over Desert.



KHAN YANUS, near Gaza, 1917.

skilful use of his guns he was materially responsible for beating off the attack on this post, for the Turks actually reached the wire. Sergeant Parker, also of the same section, received the M.M. On the 15th August the Company was withdrawn from the posts and left for Qantara, where it remained until the 25th August, when it returned to Shallufa.

161st BRIGADE CROSS THE WILDERNESS.

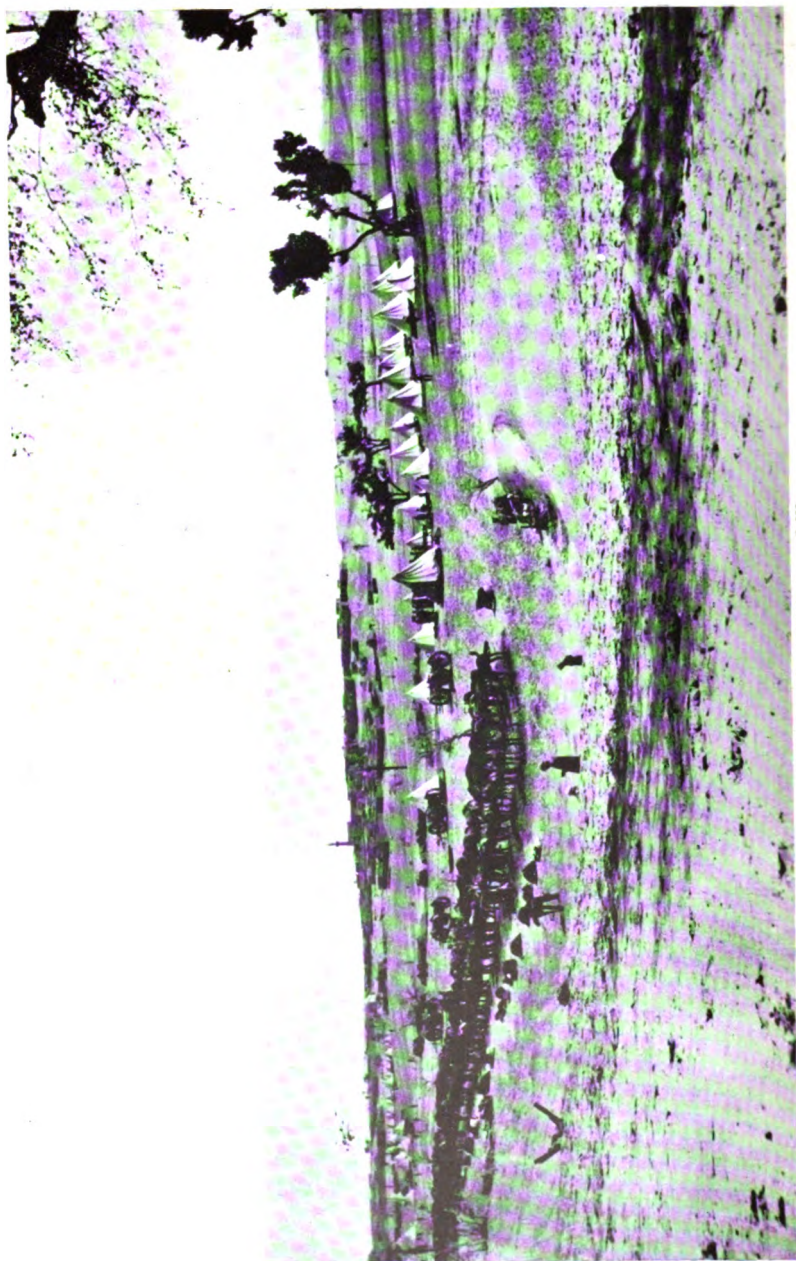
The trek of the 161st Brigade (Brig.-General W. Marriott Dodington) across the Wilderness was divided into three stages and occupied nearly the whole of the month of February, 1917. Qantara was reached on February 1st and it was not until February 24th that the Brigade encamped at El Arish. The Essex men left Moascar on January 31st in full marching order for El Ferdan *en route* for Romani, according to a time table, which gave the approximate distances thus: Ferdan, 10 miles, 31st January; Qantara, 10 miles, 1st February; Gilban, 12 miles, 2nd February; Pelusium, 7 miles, 3rd February, and Romani, 6 miles, 4th February. Until Qantara was reached the Brigade marched in two echelons. The first, consisting of 271st Brigade, R.F.A., detachment Divisional Ammunition Column, a section of the 10th Heavy Battery, R.F.A., and the Mobile Veterinary Section, was in charge of Lieut.-Colonel R. M. Laurie, and the second echelon, comprising the 2/1st East Anglian Field Company, R.E., 161st Infantry Brigade, 1/3rd East Anglian Field Ambulance and 54th Divisional Sanitary Section, was under the command of the Brigadier. The men were favoured with a hard road until they reached Gilban, a welcome change from the yielding sand of the desert, but it entailed much blistering of feet, so much so that some of the men could barely hobble. It was at Gilban that the tanks were first seen. Thereafter the troops marched by the wire road, in the defective patches of which the men caught their feet and often went sprawling. The Brigade passed through Qantara, the Army base, and bivouacked three or four miles from the Canal. Gilban was reached next day, Pelusium Siding the day following and Romani on February 4th. The Turkish dead were still lying on the battlefield and the men occupied part of their time in burying the bodies. Simple wooden stakes marked their resting places, with the inscription, "Turk at rest." "Several we found were lying, each behind his little sand hill which he had used for cover, and in most cases surrounded by large numbers of cartridge cases. Some had pushed on almost to the barbed wire." After each Battalion had drawn camels for baggage, the second stage of the journey was commenced on February 10th, according to the following march table: February 10th, arrive Rabah, 10 kilometres; 11th, Khirba, 12 kilometres; 12th, Bir-el-Abd, 10 kilometres (where it rained all day); 13th, Salmana (at this point

1. "With the 1/5th Essex in the East," p. 51 (Lieut.-Col. T. Gibbons, D.S.O.).

the Salt Lake formed a firmer footing, the columns closed up, and were able to arrive in camp almost at the same time); 14th. Tilul; 15th, Mazar (where tents were drawn). Bir-el-Abd was afterwards known as "Beer ad lib," so named because Captain J. W. Bell, of the 4th Essex, discovered a well stocked Anzac canteen—the first after leaving Romani. Every facility was generously allowed to the thirsty Essex men. As was customary when proceeding by the wire road, the Brigade marched in three columns. The troops on foot used the road, the artillery, led animals and vehicles formed the second column and the camels, the first line transport, were in the third column. In addition to camels, other baggage was taken as far as the railhead in charge of train echelon, which numbered 82 of all ranks. The weather was favourable, for there were showers of rain, with cold nights. Villagers ran beside the columns of troops and appeared at halts, obtaining a ready sale for oranges at three per piastre. They were careful, however, to first see Egyptian coin in exchange before parting with the fruit. The third stage to El Arish was short, only occupying three days—February 22nd, to El Maadan, $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles; 23rd, Bardawil, $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles; 24th, El Arish, 10 miles. The Brigade then marched in four columns, leaving the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex for line of communication duty at Mazar, with detachments at Bardawil and El Maadan, and having temporarily attached to it the 1/5th and 1/7th Battalions Royal Welsh Fusiliers, *en route* to complete the 53rd Division, already encamped at El Arish. Whilst in bivouac among the fig trees of El Arish the Brigade was completed once again by the arrival of the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex, and all ranks were inoculated against cholera. At this time the Brigade encountered the 42nd (Lancashire) Division marching back to embark for France. An Essex officer, who was camp commandant at Maadan for a short time in February, 1917, described it as a railway station, a fortified post for the purpose of holding up enemy attacks and a camping area for troops, it being one of the halts for cavalry and infantry, then continually moving up to Palestine. A most interesting visitor was an officer with a camel party, who was exploring all the highest points in the Sinai Desert with a view to establishing direct communication between El Arish and Cairo by helio! Preparations were busily proceeding for the attack upon Gaza and reconnaissances were frequent. Ere the onset that Brigade lost its highly efficient Brigade-Major, Major C. R. Roberts West, who was appointed to the General Staff, 74th Division, and he was succeeded by Captain H. L. Wright, of the 4th Northhamptons. Then came the final moves. On March 20th the Brigade marched at short notice, having little idea of what was happening in front and having seen none of the fighting except an occasional bombing 'plane. The halting place was El Burj, where the presence of vegetation indicated that the Desert had been almost passed; the next day Sheikh Zowaiid



5th Essex bivouacked at EL BUNJ, on march to Gaza, February, 1917.



View of EL ARISH from S.W.

was reached ; then, on March 24th, Rafah and the frontier, marked by marble pillars from old-time churches, a feature of the landscape which was promptly " snapped " by those who had cameras. It was at Rafah that the Brigade passed through the 52nd Division, which up to that time had led the way. The camel transport, under Lieut. Turk (7th Essex) and Lieut. W. F. Cook (6th Essex), went forward without rest and arrived at In Seirat beyond Deir el Balah at dusk, so that they had a view of Gaza in the near distance some time before the Battalions. The desert march, in the opinion of one Essex officer, was not so arduous as it sounded. The daily distances were not great and the men were very fit ; " in fact, I never saw the Battalion look or march so well. However, I remember when we crossed the frontier a cheer was raised, as we thought we had finished with tramping on sand." The green herbage was a welcome change for the eyesight and the aroma of sage, pungent at sunrise and sunset, was most noticeable.

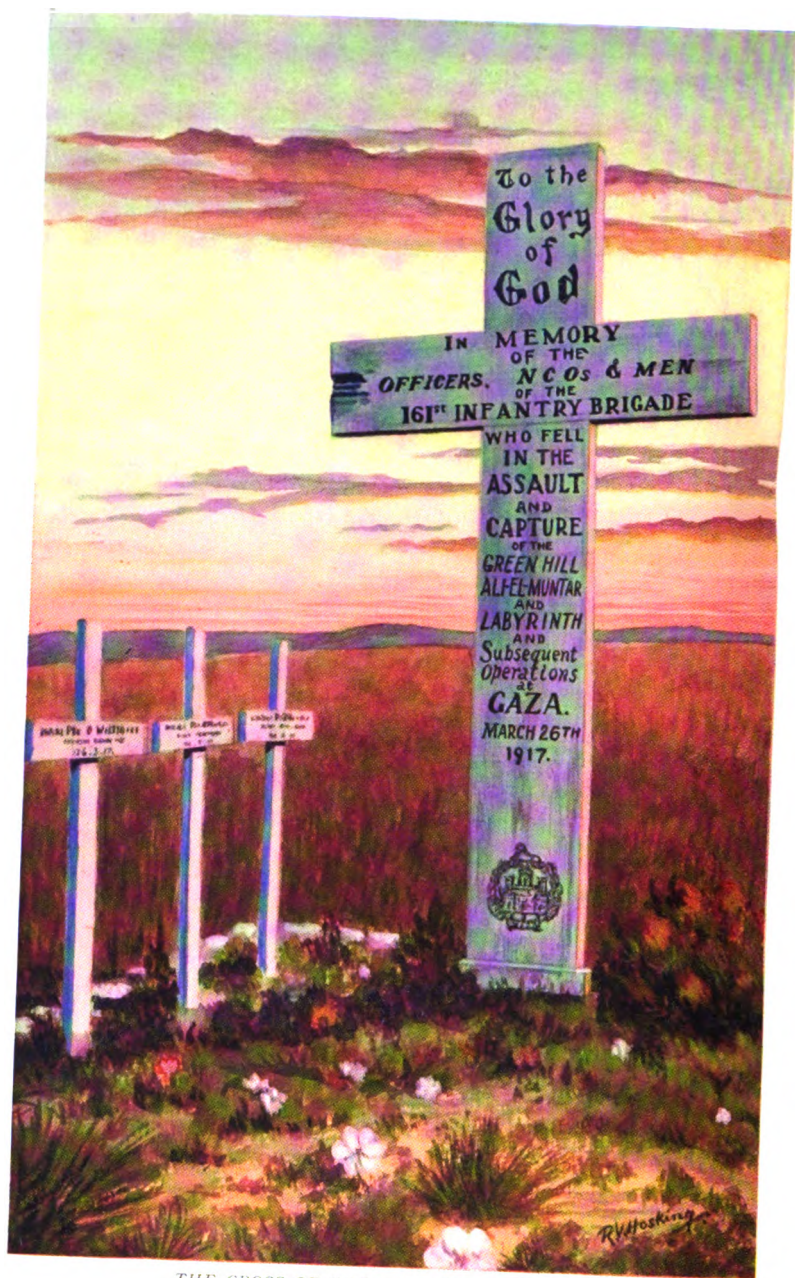
For the march through the Desert wheeled transport for the Machine Gun Company was abolished and guns and equipment were carried on pack mules. Each section had 14 pack mules—one mule for each of the four guns and tripods and 10 animals for ammunition in belts, spare parts, etc. The Company had a vexatious time whilst training the mules at Moascar, to which place they had been transferred on January 11th, 1917. When the 161st Brigade commenced its march the animals were only just getting used to carry their packs and the slightest incident upset them. The first few days of the trek were, of course, the most worrying, for as soon as the column met a few camels on the road, many of the mules would start kicking and bucking until they removed their loads. Worse even than this, much of the pack saddlery was supplied new and as hard as wood immediately before the move. Many additional mule leaders also joined at the same time. The Machine Gun Company, therefore, moved for a time in portions, and little groups would be seen all along the line of march, each consisting of about three men and a bucking mule. Eventually each group would load the mule and again struggle to reach its place in the column, only at the crucial moment to meet another mule, when the comedy would begin all over again. " However," wrote an officer, " extraordinary as it may seem, nothing serious was lost and everybody reached the destination fixed for the day's march. When the mules became trained to it, they were most wonderfully efficient and after the first few days we had no trouble and the animals served us faithfully right up into Palestine." When the Brigade arrived at Romani on February 4th, many of the Company took the opportunity of re-visiting the positions they had occupied during the fighting there.

At Romani camels were attached. The Machine Gun Company then consisted of 10 officers, 176 other ranks, 18 camel drivers, 12 riding horses (C.S.M. and C.Q.M.S. were both mounted),

56 pack mules for the gun equipment and 49 camels. Of the last-named 32 carried reserve ammunition and ten the water supply for one day, leaving seven camels only for blankets, cooking equipment, signal gear, picketing gear, officers' kits and mess stores, water and oil for machine guns. Officers were allowed 30lb. of baggage each. Included in the 176 other ranks were 34 drivers attached from the battalions of the Infantry Brigade. They had to look after and lead the mules. The whole of the 105 mules and camels had to be loaded just before moving off for the day's march and there being a far larger proportion of pack animals than with the infantry battalions, the task of loading was much more severe for the machine gun personnel. The Company vacated Romani on February 10th and on March 24th had left Sh. Zowaid for Rafah. It was at the latter place that they saw the first grass since leaving Ismalia, greeted by both troops and animals with obvious delight.

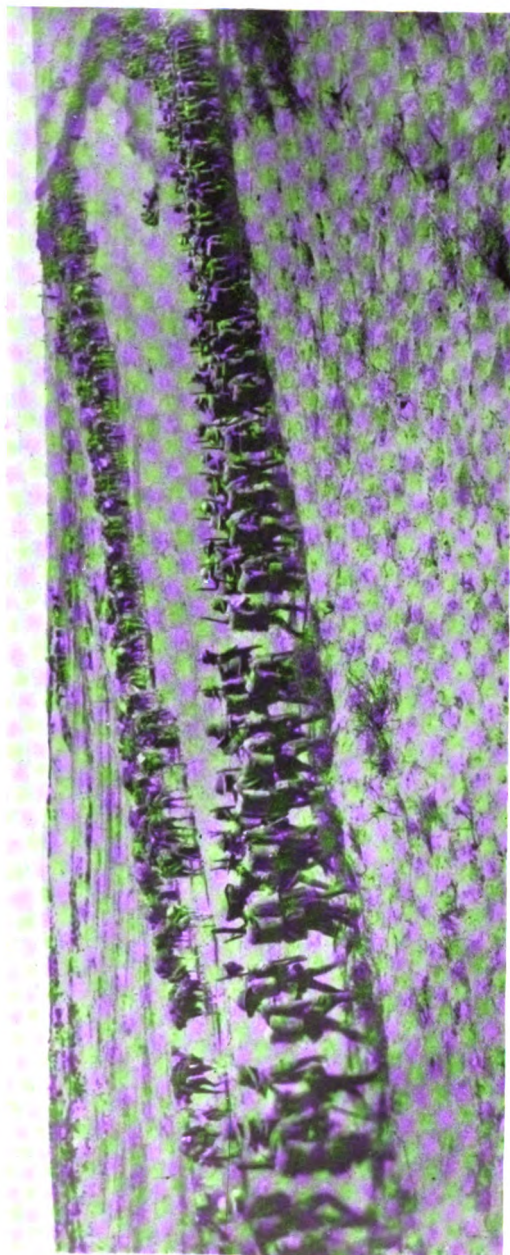
IN SIGHT OF THE PROMISED LAND.

"The march to the Promised Land was an inspiration to the troops, and few men," wrote an officer, "are likely to forget the day on which they crossed the border between Egypt and Palestine, between Africa and Asia. For months the troops had lived amongst the desert sands; that night, as darkness fell, they camped just over the frontier. Early next morning they awoke to find themselves on the threshold of a green and fertile land. Away to the north there stretched pleasant fields of barley and little green, flower-carpeted hills. Dotted here and there were villages surrounded by groves of orange trees. Truly a pleasant sight for eyes that had been long wearied by the monotonous yellow sands. A Land of Promise, indeed! One felt as the Israelites of old must have done when they gazed upon it after their desert wanderings. Closer acquaintance with the country did not altogether fulfil the promise. The villages lost their beauty when we entered them, squalid places for the most part. In spite of green fields and orchards, the way was hot and dusty. Yet there did remain a glamour about that famous land. Here was Khan Yunis, with its memories of the Crusaders. The mosque was formerly a Christian church dedicated by western warriors long ago to St. John ('Khan Yunis' is simply 'John's town'). And that hill to the north, overtopping the rest, is none other than the 'hill that is before Hebron,' to the top of which, according to the old Hebrew story, Samson carried the gates of Gaza. From the ridge of In Seirat we could see the famous city. White and beautiful it looked, too, amidst its gardens, standing out like a gem against the deep blue of the twilight sky."



THE CROSS OF GAZA, erected on the battlefield.

[Drawn by Capt. R. V. Hosking, 7th Essex.



Essex Brigade passing into the Promised Land, (No. 1.)



Essex Brigade passing into the Promised Land. (No. 2).

THE FIRST BATTLE OF GAZA.

"Gaza" is one of the ten honours which the Essex Regiment is permitted to bear upon the King's Colour for the part it played in the war of 1914-1919. It has the distinction of being a battle honour which was won solely by the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions of the Essex Regiment. These battalions were constituted the 161st Brigade of the 54th (East Anglian) Division. The Brigade was prominently engaged in all three battles of Gaza (March, 1917, April, 1917, and November, 1917), at the last of which a way was opened for the victorious advance through Palestine. Gaza, the old Philistrian capital, is one of the historic cities of the world. Situated at the point of junction of the old trade routes from Egypt, Arabia and Petra to Syria, the earliest record of its existence is in the Tell-el-Amarna tablets. It was then held by Egypt, with which country the town has always had a close association. Later on, it was occupied by Hezekiah of Judah, then by Assyria. Alexander the Great took it in 332 B.C. after a five months' siege, Alexander Jannæus destroyed it in 90 B.C., and it was rebuilt by Aulus Gabinius in 57 B.C. upon a new site. In the first centuries of the Christian era it was a flourishing Greek city. At the beginning of the Fourth Century Christianity triumphed and for two centuries Gaza was held in high repute for its learning. With its conquest by the Moslems in 635 this influence waned and it was not revived when it was occupied by the Crusaders. In the middle of the Thirteenth Century the city was recaptured by the Moslems, who held it until British troops entered the gates in 1917, save for the brief period when Napoleon's genius brought it under French dominion. The modern town, situated amid corn land and sandy waste land covered with cactus, contained a pre-war population of about 16,000 people, the most interesting natural feature being a grove of olives on the north side, which formed a magnificent avenue four miles in length. The old walls had long since been buried beneath mounds of rubbish carpeted with green. Lofty minarets rose above the city in all directions, but the most prominent building was a mosque, built of ancient materials, and which was shattered by British gunfire before the city was occupied in November, 1917. "The land for the three miles between the city and the sea consists principally of sand dunes. There is no natural harbour, but traces of ruins near the shore mark the site of the old Maxima Gazae or Limena Gaza. Hāshem, an ancestor of Mahomet, lies buried in the town. On the east are remains of a racecourse, the corners marked by granite shafts with Greek inscriptions on them. To the south is a remarkable hill, quite isolated and bare, with a small mosque and a graveyard. It is called El Muntar, the watch

tower, and is supposed to be the mountain 'before (or facing) Hebron,' to which Samson carried the gates of Gaza." The city's pre-war commercial prosperity was due, apart from its importance as a centre situate upon a trade route, to an extensive manufacture of black pottery and an export trade in barley.

Before he could strike at Gaza Sir Archibald Murray, then commanding-in-chief the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, had to secure the desert route, and this task he successfully accomplished when he seized El Arish late in December, 1916, after achieving a brilliant victory over the Turks in the fight for the water wells of Romani. On January 11th following, the garrison of the frontier post at Rafah was surprised by the Desert Column after a long night march, the troops returning again to El Arish with their prisoners. Thus was the way made plain to Palestine. Much had to be done, however, before the campaign could be prosecuted further. Four infantry divisions (52nd, 53rd, 54th and 74th, the last-named then being formed from dismounted yeomanry brigades) had to be concentrated in and around El Arish, in addition to the two cavalry divisions, forming the Desert Column, and a brigade of camelry. For the transport of munitions, food and other supplies a standard gauge line was laid from Qantara to El Arish and later to Wadi Ghazze, a distance of 140 miles, at the rate of twenty miles per month. By the middle of March, 1917, it had reached Rafah. Command of the sea also enabled supplies to be landed on the beach at El Arish. Special arrangements were made for the conveyance of water, which was taken by train, camel convoy and pipe line, and had often to be filtered and chlorinated before use. Large reservoirs were also constructed and by October, 1917, a quarter of a million gallons of water daily could be transferred to distribution centres and made available for the troops, but much of this work was not done until after the first attempt upon Gaza had been repulsed.

THE WIRE ROAD.

The infantry in the earlier months of the campaign had to march most of the way and one division, the 52nd, which was in the van from Romani, gave much assistance in laying the wire road, which was to become one of the most celebrated features of the campaign. "These wire roads were much used over the sand and deep dust before Gaza. They doubled the speed with which troops could march and the saving in human energy was incalculable." "It is said," wrote an officer, "that the inventor of the wire road was an obscure private or N.C.O. of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Whomever he may have been he deserves to be remembered with gratitude by every officer, N.C.O. and man who had to tramp through the desert of Sinai. The track across the northern section is, perhaps, the oldest road in the world. Since the days when the Shepherd Kings invaded Egypt, armies too numerous to name have passed and repassed

1. "Encyclopædia Britannica."

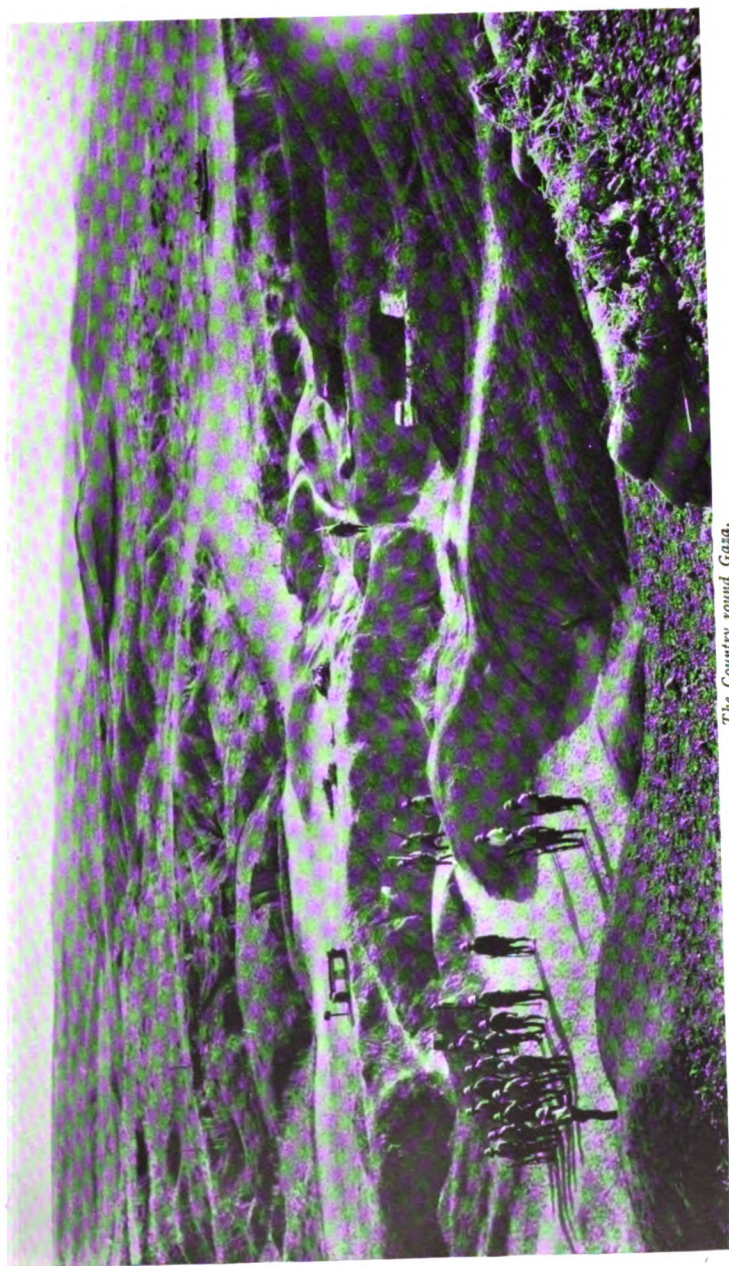
along this ancient highway, treading the soft desert sands. None trod them so easily, however, as the last army to pass that way—our own. And that was due mainly to that blessed invention, the wire road. The device was very simple—one of those of which people say, 'I wonder why nobody ever thought of that before.' It consisted of a belt of wire netting, three or four rolls broad, laid on the sand and pegged down securely at regular intervals. This prevented the foot from sinking in the sand and so made marching very much less fatiguing. Prior to the laying of the road an experiment had been made with large flat shoes of stiff, close-meshed wire strapped to the feet, somewhat similar in design to Canadian snow shoes. But these were a failure. The men preferred to march without them and they were soon discarded. The wire road, on the other hand, was an immediate success. It was as easy walking along it as along a macadam road at home—easier, indeed, for it was not so hard. Only infantry were allowed to use the road. Camels, horses and wheeled traffic tore the wire and had, therefore, to confine themselves to the track in the sand alongside. Frequent gaps were left to allow such traffic to cross. The wire needed constant attention, as it was often broken or worn through. Here and there were little camps of the R.E., who were responsible for the upkeep and repair of specified stretches of the road, like surfacemen on the railway. The infantry during their so-called 'rest' periods were often called upon to provide working parties for road repairs—a task which produced less 'grousing' than many others, for the men knew what they owed to the road and didn't grudge working to keep it in order. It was in Sinai, with its endless stretches of sand, that the road was of most use. But even after Palestine was reached, there were areas of sand and deep dust where the device proved most useful. The wire road takes its honourable place with the desert railway and the water pipe as one of the three great engineering triumphs which made possible the crossing of the desert by so large an army and its maintenance so far from the base." An officer of the 1/5th Essex also recalled that the use of wire netting was deemed an ingenious wartime invention, but that a lance-corporal in his platoon, when he saw it, said he had known it to be used in that way at collieries where coal dust had to be walked over.

Early in 1917 Sir Archibald Murray was instructed that his first responsibility in the summer months was the defence of Egypt, with preparations for an offensive in the following Autumn. Early in March, however, a marked change had come over the state of affairs in the Near East. Baghdad had been occupied and the Turkish Army in Mesopotamia had been shattered. That alone stimulated effort to maintain pressure upon the Turks, but the desire was strengthened by the knowledge that Russia was faced with revolution and it was imperative that the Ottoman power should be fully occupied in defending its own territory. Thus it was that on March 30th the G.O.C. was

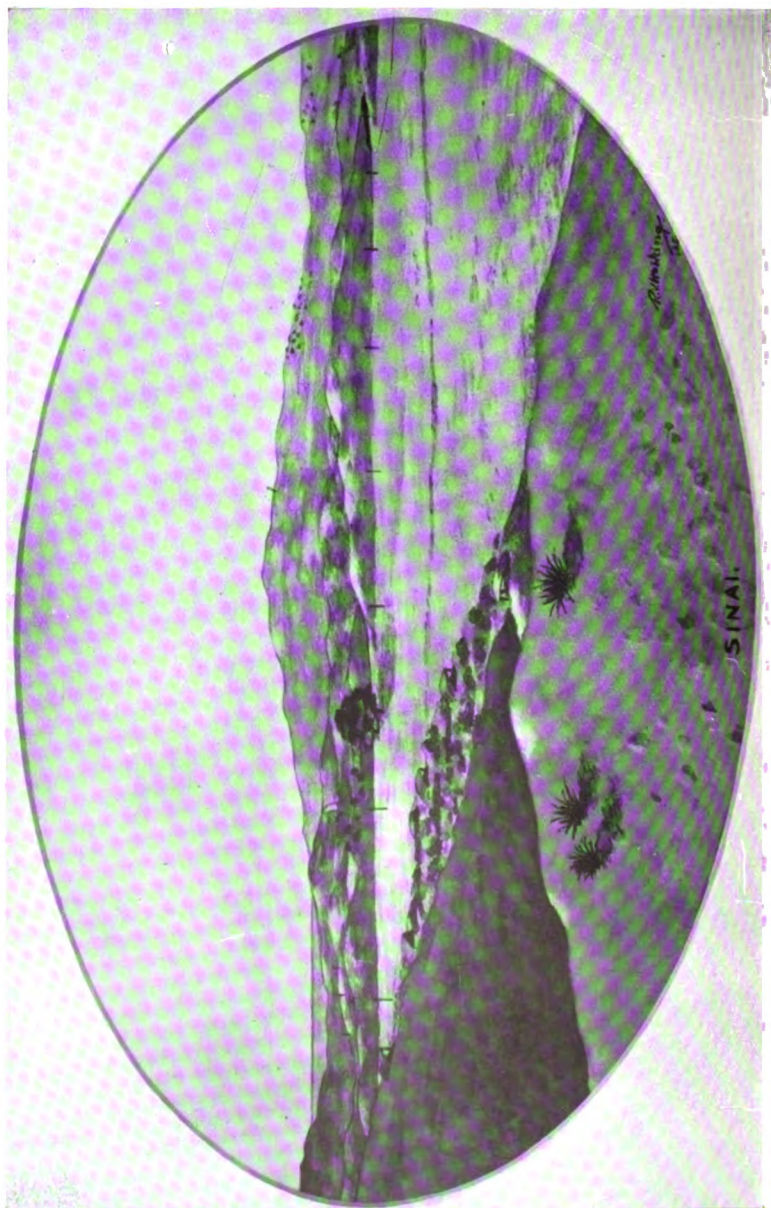
directed by the Higher Command to defeat the enemy in Southern Palestine and occupy Jerusalem. By that date, however, he had fought the first battle of Gaza and was making preparation for the second attempt. Sir Archibald Murray held that to keep the enemy in check it was necessary to maintain the offensive. He had been disappointed in his expectation of bringing the Turks to a stand by their hasty evacuation of the strong position of Weli Sheikh Nuran before the British troops were within striking distance. "It was to prevent a repetition of these tactics and to bring the Turks to fight that I determined to attack the Gaza position as soon as possible, considering that the advantage of thus exerting pressure on the enemy and possibly taking Gaza by a *coup de main* would outweigh the risk of making the attack in a waterless country considerably in advance of the railroad." The British General's decision was also influenced by the quietness of the tribes of the Western Desert, which enabled him to amalgamate the two commands there and man the posts with garrison battalions, light armoured motor batteries, light car patrols and the Bikanir Camel Corps. It was also known that the Turkish Army was affected by disease and that great loss was being experienced by desertion from reinforcing drafts.

THE NATURE OF THE COUNTRY.

The stroke which Sir Archibald Murray designed to deliver was a bold one, needing precise manipulation and nicety of adjustment. It was much more than a skilful feat of arms, however; it was also a conquest of natural difficulties, one of which, lack of water supply, was to be a determining cause in the failure of the first two attempts to snatch Gaza from the Army of the Crescent. The hazard of the situation will be better appreciated by an understanding of the physical characteristics. North and south through Palestine runs a great mountain ridge, rising at places to a height of 3,500 feet. On the east there is a steep fall to the Jordan and the Dead Sea, but on the north and west there are gradual slopes to the three plains of Esdraelon, Sharon and Philistia, and it was the entrance to the last-named that the British were endeavouring to force. The central mountain ridge of Palestine is traversed by a single road through Nazareth and Jerusalem to Beersheba, whilst across it runs the track from Jericho through Jerusalem to the port of Jaffa. The coastal plain of Philistia has been described as for the most part as of rolling downland, with a regular rainfall from November to March and wells sufficient to supply local needs. Many tracks intersect the plain, which are passable in dry weather, but the three roads to which military attention had to be paid were the coast road to Jaffa from Gaza, the second, that to Jerusalem, and the third, that to Beersheba. The last-named had been converted, under the supervision of German engineers, into an excellent motor route and was to prove a potent help to the Turks in succouring the sorely pressed garrison of Gaza. The chief



The Country round Gaza.



natural obstacles were the deep wadis, or rain courses, dry in summer, which drained the Judean Hills. The most important of these was the Wadi Ghazze, which entered the sea six miles south of Gaza; it had precipitous banks, with a stony bed varying in width from 100 to 300 yards. At the entrance to the Plain of Philistia, some 35 miles apart, stood Gaza and Beersheba. "The city of Gaza is built on a plateau about 200ft. high, about two miles inland, and separated from the sea by a belt of sand hills. On the north-east and east are cultivated downlands, whose ridges at first tend to run parallel to the coast. The country becomes rocky and arid by Sheria as the foothills of the Judean range are approached. The Gaza plateau is irrigated on the south and south-west of the city, and the plots and paths are surrounded by dense cactus hedges. On the south-east and south-west are two prominent features, Ali Muntar and Samson Ridge respectively. The former is a conical hill dominating the surrounding plateau and the city. Samson Ridge marks the boundary between the sand dunes and the cultivation. To the south of Ali Muntar, over some 5,000 yards of open ground, lie the Mansura Ridge and Sheikh Abbas, whence the ground falls to the Wadi Ghazze and it becomes much intersected and waterworn. At Sheikh Abbas the ridge turns south-west and so the high ground forms a salient. Across the Wadi Ghazze the hills of In Seirat rise sharply to about 400 feet and are scored with lesser watercourses, which afford good cover from view. All the ground, except in the sand hills by the coast, is easy to dig in and stands up well while dry. The country between Gaza and the Wadi Sheria offers little obstacle to mounted troops, but is almost devoid of water." This was the terrain across which the British Army was to advance to the capture of Gaza and whereon it was encamped from March to November, 1917.

SIR ARCHIBALD MURRAY'S OBJECTIVES.

In making his forward move Sir Archibald Murray's information was that the Turks, to the strength of two divisions, lay between Gaza and Tell esh Sheria, with a small garrison at Beersheba. It was open to him to make his attempt to enter Palestine by way of the last-named town, but he held that by so doing he would be drawing his line of communication parallel to the enemy's front, and there was no tactical advantage to be gained by linking up the military railway with the Central Palestine Railway either at Beersheba or Tell esh Sheria. He was of opinion that the true line of advance was by the coast road, because the threat to the enemy was not less effective, his own line of communications was more easily protected, and railway construction was more rapid owing to the absence of gradients, whilst there was a better supply of water. The object

1. See "Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914-1918," (*Major-General Sir M. G. E. Bowman Manifold, K.B.E., R.E., Signal Officer-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force*).

of the movement was threefold. "Firstly," he held, "to seize the line of the Wadi Ghazze to cover the advance of the railway; secondly, at all costs to prevent the enemy from retiring without a fight; thirdly, if possible, to capture Gaza by a *coup de main* and to cut off its garrison." To cover the infantry when endeavouring to occupy the works which protected the city, a screen of mounted troops was thrown round the threatened area on the north and east, so that any effort to reinforce the garrison might be headed off and delayed. On the other hand, if the city resisted more than two days, Turkish pressure from the north and east against the cavalry screen would by that time have become decisive. Von Kressenstein seized the opportunity of striking against the British right and it was this counter move which decided the issue of the first battle. The stout resistance of the garrison at Gaza, although reduced to extremity, gave him time to develop the threat to our communications with Rafah into an active menace and so the attack was relinquished at the close of the day in favour of holding a line through Mansura and El Burjabye, with protection on the flank. When the attempt was renewed on April 17th the British force had facing it an enheartened Turkish army of five divisions and one cavalry division and though the effort, as on the first occasion, was made with the greatest gallantry and self-sacrifice in three days' fighting, the end of this phase of the campaign came with Gaza still in Turkish occupation. It was not until November that the British Army burst through at Beersheba and later forced the defences of Gaza, but on that occasion Lord Allenby had succeeded Sir Archibald Murray in chief command.

By the middle of the month of March, 1917, when Sir Archibald Murray was of opinion that the Turks intended to withdraw from the Gaza—Tell esh Sheria—Beersheba line, the Desert Column was between Rafah and Sheikh Zowaiid, the 52nd Division was at Sheikh Zowaiid and the 54th Division between that place and El Arish. Being desirous of bringing the enemy to action, the G.O.C. ordered the preliminary movements which concentrated the Eastern Force in the neighbourhood of Gaza. He was encouraged in his bold design by the knowledge that Baghdad had fallen and that the Turks had been driven out of Mesopotamia. The three objects which the Eastern Force were asked to attain were in succession to occupy the line of the Wadi Ghazze as a cover to railway construction, to prevent the enemy withdrawing without a fight, and to capture Gaza and its garrison. On March 20th General Dobell, G.O.C. Eastern Force, moved his headquarters to Rafah, and by the evening of March 25th the Desert Column, part of the Eastern Force, to which the 53rd Division was attached, were at Deir el Balah, a small village to the south-west of the Wadi Ghazze, the 54th Division was at In Seirat under the hills to the east of Deir el Balah, the 52nd Division at Khan Yunis and the Imperial Camel Corps and armoured batteries about Abasan el Kebir, covering the right flank. The advanced

general headquarters were at El Arish and the battle headquarters of the Eastern Force were just north of In Seirat. All was in readiness for attack early on the following day (March 26th). The main effort against Gaza was to be made by the 53rd Division, to which was attached the 161st Brigade of the 51th Division, moving against the south front of Gaza, with the remainder of the 54th Division in support at Sheikh Abbas, to protect the 53rd from a counterstroke from the east. The 52nd Division was in general reserve. The cavalry of the Desert Column were to encircle the town to the north and east in the early hours of the morning in order to block the enemy's line of retreat, but also to observe the Turkish main body in the Najd-Huj area and to hinder its movements so far as the strength of the screen would permit. On the sea side of the Rafah-Gaza road a detachment of all arms, under Lieut.-Colonel Money, was to take up a position in the sand dunes and thus protect the flank. The Official History of the operations in Palestine mentions that the Eastern Force at this date was very short of artillery. "The third artillery brigade of each division was without howitzers and in the case of the 53rd and 54th Divisions even the 18-pounder batteries of these brigades were still in the Canal Defences. The whole force had only three heavy batteries (twelve 60-pounders), while, to economize transport, only one section (two guns) of each of these batteries was brought up for the First Battle of Gaza. The ammunition supply was by no means large."

The opening moves were hindered by a dense fog which came on some time before dawn and did not clear before 7.30 a.m. Sir Archibald Murray holds that this delay had a serious effect on the success of the subsequent operations. Leaving their bivouacs at 2.30 a.m., the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division was across the Wadi Ghazze at 6.15 a.m., and at 9.30 had arrived at Beit Durdis. By 10 a.m. it had sent out detachments to the west, north and east. When the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade reached the sea they closed the northern exit from Gaza, and captured in the course of their movement the commander of the 53rd Turkish Division, with his staff, as he was driving into the town. The Imperial Mounted Division followed the Anzac Division and arrived at Kh. er Rescim by 10 a.m., where it sent out patrols towards Hureira, Tell esh Sheria and Huj, whilst two squadrons of the 5th Mounted Brigade guarded the Beersheba-Gaza road, five miles south-east of the latter city. The Imperial Camel Corps were at El Mendur, to assist the Imperial Mounted Division in observing enemy movements from Huj and Hereira.

ATTACK OF THE 53rd DIVISION.

Having followed the early fortunes of the cavalry force, let us turn to the infantry. The 53rd Division (Major-General A. G. Dallas) marched from Deir el Balah about 1 a.m. So thick was the atmosphere that the leading battalion of the 158th Brigade had to grope its way over the Wadi Ghazze and make its

first objective, El Burjabye, by compass bearing. It was reached at 6.15 a.m. This Brigade had occupied Mansura ridge by 7.45 a.m., three-quarters of an hour late. The Turks observed the Brigade when the fog lifted at 8.20 a.m. and sounded the alarm, but, still pressing on, the troops by 9 a.m. had reached unopposed a point 4,000 yards south of Ali Muntar. The 160th Brigade, on the left, had meanwhile, without incident, reached Esh Sheluf, the top of the rise to the Gaza plateau, whilst the 159th Brigade was moving in the rear of the 158th Brigade through Mansura. The left flank was covered by the Gloucestershire Hussars, with the 2/4th Royal West Kents and a section of 60-pounders, the infantry battalion meeting with fire from the Turks in the sandhills about Sheikh Hasan. The 54th Division (Major-General S. W. Hare), consisting of the 162nd and 163rd Brigades, crossed the Wadi Ghazze at 7 a.m. and took up a defensive position on the Sheikh Abbas ridge, south-east of Gaza, but the 161st Brigade (Essex Territorial Infantry Brigade), with a brigade of field artillery, remained in the vicinity of the Wadi to await the orders of the G.O.C. 53rd Division. Thus was the stage set for the infantry fight.

Final orders for the attack on the Ali el Muntar position by the 53rd Division were issued at 11 a.m. The 160th Brigade was directed to get astride the Esh Sheluf-Ali el Muntar Ridge and seize the enemy's south-western defences; the 158th Brigade was to take the prominent Ali el Muntar Ridge and then the southern outskirts of Gaza, whilst the 159th Brigade, which had one battalion in divisional reserve, was to pivot on the right of the 158th Brigade, and then be directed against Clay Hill, 1,200 yards north-east of Ali el Muntar. Thus there was a gap in the attack, for Green Hill, which lay between Ali el Muntar and Middlesex Hill, the latter on the left, was not subjected to frontal assault. It was not so prominent a feature as either Ali el Muntar or Middlesex Hill, but it had strong works upon it and the enfilading fire which was brought to bear upon both the 158th and 160th Brigades had a considerable influence in delaying the capture of their objectives. The deployment of the two leading brigades began at 11.50 a.m. The 159th Brigade followed the 158th. The 160th Brigade was covered for a time by the ridge, but the advance of the two other Brigades was across open ground devoid of cover. Fire smote the 158th Brigade at noon when crossing the front of Green Hill. The Brigade pivoted upon the 5th R.W.F., when it reached the cactus garden, well-known later to the 161st Brigade, and thus brought its front to face the Ali el Muntar position. The leading battalions got within 800 yards of the position before they were checked. Soon afterwards the 159th Brigade came into line on the right. Both Brigades gallantly persisted and by 1.45 were within 500 yards of the Turkish trenches, having to face heavy rifle, machine gun and shrapnel fire. The 1st Herefords were sent from brigade reserve against Green Hill, which was causing trouble, but the

force was totally insufficient and the battalion edged towards the 158th Brigade. The 160th Brigade had seized the Labyrinth by 1.30 p.m., but was not so successful against the centre of Es Sire ridge, where, however, the Sussex succeeded in obtaining a hold about 4 p.m. The Anzac Mounted Division penetrated Gaza in two places at 3.30 p.m. Then, just before 4 p.m., determined parties of the 5th R.W.F. and 5th Welch occupied the enemy's defences by Ali el Muntar Mosque and held on, covered by the fire of the 271st Brigade, R.F.A. The garrison on Green Hill was still unsubdued.

ADVANCE AND SUBSEQUENT WITHDRAWAL.

This brought the opportunity for which the 161st Brigade had been so long preparing. It had been ordered to rendezvous at Sheikh Nebhan, on the Wadi Ghazze, but upon arrival at that place (8.45 a.m.) it was ordered to El Burjabye, west of Sheikh Abbas and south of Mansura, so as to be ready to support either the 53rd or 54th Divisions. The Brigade, however, occupied a point about 2,000 yards south-south-east of Es Sire, as the slopes of the El Burjabye ridge were too exposed. The line of march had been previously reconnoitred by Major G. G. Ewer (7th Essex) and he proved an admirable guide to the Brigade. The Official History discloses that General Dallas at 10.4 a.m. telegraphed to the Desert Column for information of the disposition of the Brigade and 271st Brigade, R.F.A., which were being lent him by the Eastern Force. The Desert Column replied, without apparently consulting Eastern Force, that the Brigade was at Sheikh Nebhan. The Brigade was, however, on the move, and after having reached El Burjabye had, as noted above, been placed by the Brigadier for safety in the valley between the Burjabye and Es Sire ridges, only a mile and a half from Mansura. A telegraphic message was sent by General Dallas at 11.45, ordering it to move up to Mansura, but no trace of the receipt of such a message reached the Brigade, although a patrol was stationed at the point which was taken to be El Burjabye. A staff officer was subsequently sent to find the Brigade, but it was not until 1.10 p.m. that orders were received and then, not brought by staff officers, but by a motor-cyclist, who came from Eastern Force with an order for the Brigade to move to Mansura at 12.45 p.m. The Brigade was in motion by 1.30 p.m. and as the column neared the ridge by way of Happy Valley, the Brigadier rode forward to meet the Divisional Commander (General Dallas). Upon his arrival at Mansura the G.O.C. pointed out Green Hill and gave orders that the Brigade were to "put the lid on it" and take it, leaving one battalion in divisional reserve. "The Brigade responded with the greatest gallantry in the face of a heavy fire and after some hard fighting it pushed home its attack with complete success, so that, when darkness fell, the whole of the Ali Muntar position had been carried and a footing gained on the ridge to a point about 1,200 yards north-east

of that position."¹ After the battle it became known that the situation was so critical in Gaza at one time that the German commandant had burnt his papers, bidden farewell to his friends and destroyed his wireless station. The British General Staff, unknowing, were at the time far more concerned with enemy pressure from the east, the brunt of which was borne by the 8rd Australian Light Horse Brigade. The Anzac Cavalry on the north were by sunset established in the cactus bushes on the outskirts of the town.

The situation, as darkness fell, is thus described by Sir Archibald Murray: "Gaza was enveloped, and the enemy, in addition to heavy losses in killed and wounded, had lost 700 prisoners. The 53rd Division was occupying the Ali Muntar position, which it had captured, but its right flank was very much in the air, only a thin line of cavalry holding off the relief columns of continually increasing strength which were approaching from north and east. In support of this Division, the 54th Division, less one brigade, was holding Sheikh Abbas, with its left about 2½ miles from the flank of the 53rd. The Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division was very much extended round Gaza and was engaged in street fighting. The Imperial Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade, on a very wide front, were endeavouring to hold off enemy forces. The majority of the mounted troops had been unable to water their horses during the day and it appeared that, unless Gaza was captured during the day, they would have to withdraw west of the Wadi Ghazze in order to water their animals. Strong columns of the enemy, with guns, were moving to the relief of Gaza from the north, north-east and south-east. It was at this moment that the loss of two hours' daylight made itself particularly felt, since, had two more hours' daylight now been available, there is no doubt that the infantry would have been able to consolidate the positions they had won and that arrangements could have been made by which the 54th Division could have effected junction with the 53rd. It is, perhaps, possible that, if General Dobell had, at this stage, pushed forward his reserve (the 52nd Division) to support the 53rd, the result would have been different, but the difficulty of supplying water for men and horses would have been immense and impossible to realize by those who were not on the spot."

The G.O.C. Desert Column (General Sir P. Chetwode) withdrew the mounted divisions west of the Wadi Ghazze without serious opposition and the commander of the 53rd Division, deprived of the screen, was ordered to withdraw during the night and obtain touch with the 54th Division, which had already been ordered to fall back to a line on the El Burjabye ridge, running south westward from Mansura. The 161st Brigade (Essex Territorials), in conformity with this movement, were to withdraw

1. "Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches," p. 147.

from Green Hill, and establish contact with the left of the 54th. Some misconception occurred during the last moves of the day. Shortly before 7 p.m. General Chetwode informed General Dallas of the withdrawal of the mounted troops and that, as his right would be in the air, he must withdraw it sufficiently to make touch with the 54th Division. General Dallas was not unnaturally averse to abandoning the ground and, unaware that the 54th Division's left flank now lay only "a mile north of Mansura and not much over a mile from the 161st Brigade on Green Hill," was under the impression that he had to get touch with the 54th Division in its original position at Sheikh Abbas, four miles from his right on Clay Hill. His request for troops to fill the gap on his right was not complied with and a peremptory verbal order was sent that the right of the 53rd Division should be thrown back to meet the left of the 54th. At 10.30 p.m. accordingly he gave orders that a new line should be occupied from the caves at Tell el 'Ujul, near the Wadi Ghazze, on the left, through a point a mile north of Esh Sheluf, thence to Mansura and Sheikh Abbas. The 158th Brigade was placed in divisional reserve. This order was communicated to the Desert Column, with the statement that the General intended to join up with the 54th Division on the western slopes of Sheikh Abbas. "The exhausted and numerically inadequate staff of General Chetwode," states the Official History, "did not even then realize the misconception of the G.O.C. 53rd Division. It was nearly midnight when General Dallas's staff discovered that the 54th Division was drawing in to the north of Mansura. Had he known this movement was in progress he would certainly not have abandoned all the captured positions, probably none of it with the exception of Clay Hill. The 159th Brigade, which was to have taken over from Mansura to Sheikh Abbas, was now moved into divisional reserve. The withdrawal of the troops took a considerable time, as patrols had been pushed right into the outskirts of Gaza. Some of these did not return till dawn, but the retirement was generally complete by 4 a.m. on the 27th." In a footnote it is stated that General Dallas explained on the telephone the full extent of his withdrawal to General Chetwode. The latter said that he did not understand his subordinate to mean that he was abandoning anything like so much ground. "In any case the responsibility rests upon Desert Column headquarters, since General Dallas had telegraphed to it the line he was taking up." Thus came about the withdrawal at the moment of apparent victory which so perplexed the 161st Brigade. When commenting upon the whole operation, however, the Official Historian points out, "The misunderstanding, though it accounts for the abandonment of the position gained, does not alter the fact that the holding of the advanced line on Ali el Muntar, with the Turkish artillery on Sheikh Abbas, would have been an exceedingly difficult matter, unless Gaza could be taken immediately." There was a report current among the troops

at the time that a wireless message had been picked up at Cairo which revealed that the Turkish headquarters had ordered a general retirement at about the same time that the Essex Brigade fell back from Green Hill.

At daybreak (5 a.m., March 27th) General Chetwode realized the full extent of the position that had been abandoned and immediately gave orders for reconnaissance to see if the Turks had reoccupied it. Patrols were sent forward by the 160th and 161st Brigades. They found no Turks and Brigadier-General Dodington accordingly promptly supported them by the 7th Essex, followed by the 6th Essex. It was a severe test, moral and physical, for troops who had been without rest (except for what they got on the ridges while awaiting the launching of the attack) for over thirty-six hours, who had gallantly captured the position and then been withdrawn from it. Battalions of the 160th Brigade were also preparing to obtain touch with the 161st Brigade when the patrols of the latter were observed falling back. The Herefordshires were actually advancing on the right when the 6th and 7th Essex were seen to be retiring. A violent Turkish counter-attack, delivered at 6 a.m., created a salient, which caused the British line to be withdrawn to eliminate the acute angle of the junction with the 54th Division, which had been also assailed from Sheikh Abbas, the enemy artillery fire doing damage to the transport in the rear. "Nevertheless, though tired and ill-supplied with water, the 53rd and 54th Divisions, now placed under the command of the G.O.C. 53rd Division, remained throughout the day staunch and cheerful and perfectly capable of repulsing, with heavy losses to the enemy, any Turkish counter-attacks. At no point was any enemy attack successful." The Higher Command, however, held that the position could not be permanently retained, being exposed to attack and artillery fire from three directions. The absence of water also had a vital influence upon their decision. Sir Archibald Murray thinks that if the G.O.C. Eastern Force could have advanced with his three infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions Gaza would have been ours, "but the reorganization of the force for a deliberate attack would have taken a considerable time, the horses of the cavalry were very fatigued and the distance of the railhead from the front line put the immediate maintenance of such a force with supplies, water and ammunition entirely out of the question."

Thus it was that the two divisions, after withstanding another counter-attack at 4 p.m., were withdrawn to the western side of the Wadi Ghazze and a defensive position established covering Deir el Balah, where the enemy did not follow. This was accomplished by 4 a.m. on March 28th. On March 29th the Wadi Ghazze was divided into sections and allotted to the 52nd, 53rd and 54th Divisions respectively for the purpose of covering

1. Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches, pp. 151-2.

the construction of the railway, which was just reaching Khan Yunis. Sir Archibald Murray argues that he succeeded in two of his objects, viz., to seize Wadi Ghazze and to prevent the enemy retiring further without a fight, but that he failed in his third object, the capture of Gaza, owing to the fog on the early morning of March 26th and the waterless nature of the country. He wrote with enthusiasm of the 53rd Division and the 161st Brigade (Essex Territorials), "which had not been seriously in action since the evacuation of Suvla Bay at the end of 1915 yet fought with the utmost gallantry and endurance, and showed to the full the splendid fighting qualities which they possess."

In the course of a special order, dated April 1st, 1917, Lieut.-General Sir Charles Dobell, commanding the Eastern Force, wrote: "The 53rd Division, assisted by part of the 54th Division, accomplished a magnificent feat in taking the Ali el Muntar position—an achievement of which the troops are entitled to be very proud, and in which they showed the greatest gallantry, devotion and determination. . . . The brunt of the fighting fell as is usual on the infantry, and the infantry of the 53rd Division and the 161st Brigade more than lived up to the traditions of the British Army. In a very hard-fought fight they did all that was asked of them, carrying the enemy's position in the face of most determined opposition and regardless of the cost. Unfortunately, time robbed them of the full advantage of their victory, enabling strong enemy reinforcements to reach the battlefield before the position could be consolidated and saving the remnant of the garrison at Gaza."

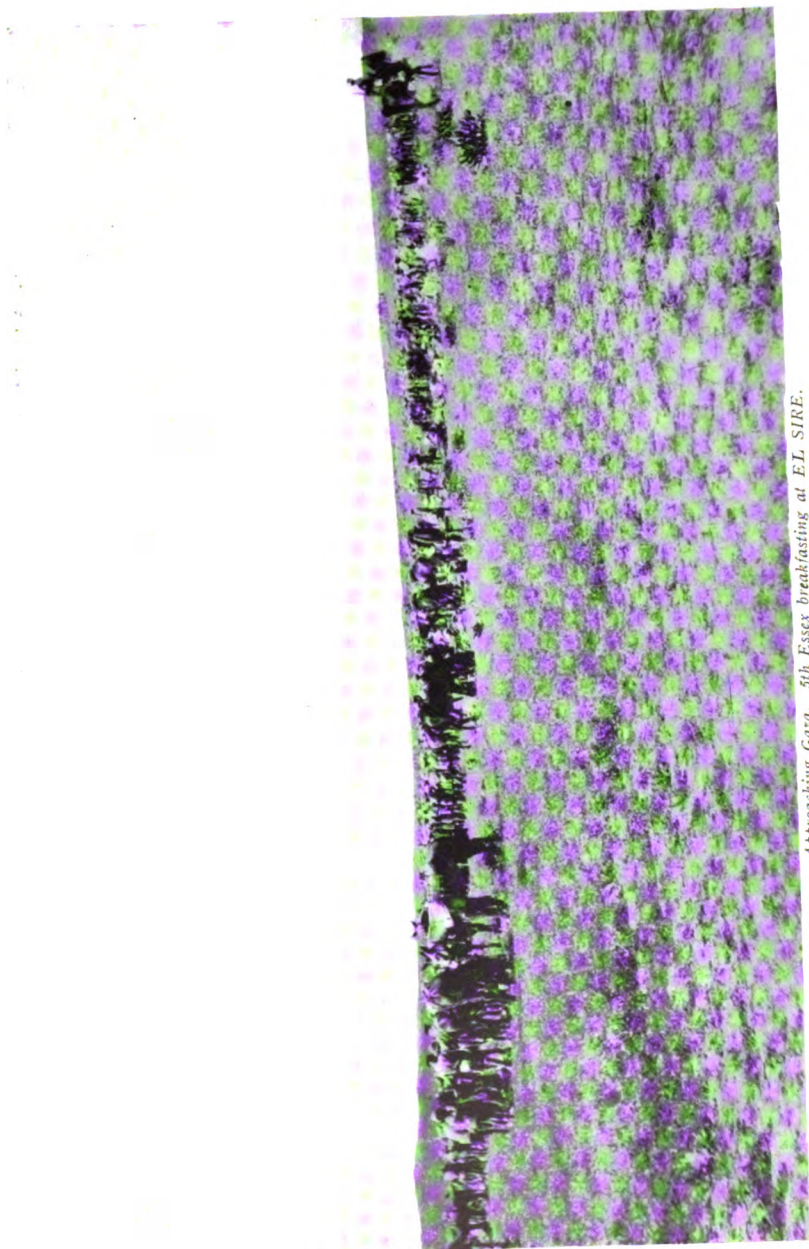
"The course of the action," to quote another opinion, "remarkably resembled that of the two preceding actions, Maghdaba and Rafah. In each case the enemy was surprised, but resisted stubbornly until his reinforcements were at hand and the breaking off of the action was under serious consideration. Only, in the case of Gaza, the risks of continuing the attack seemed to outweigh the chances of success. The two hours of daylight, lost in the morning by the fog, could never be made up and Gaza was not taken until seven months later, under very altered conditions. Here certainly was a case in which the fog had favoured the defence by its delaying power." The losses were just under four thousand, including over five hundred missing, of whom five officers and 241 other ranks, wounded and unwounded, were subsequently ascertained to have been taken prisoners. The heaviest casualties fell upon the 161st Brigade. The Turks lost 837 in prisoners. Their dead and wounded were just under 2,500. "The capture of Ali el Muntar Ridge by the 53rd Division and the 161st Brigade of the 54th Division will bear comparison with the classic exploits of British infantry," wrote Colonel A. P. Wavell, in "Palestine Campaigns." "A pitiless Eastern sun beat down on men who had already marched far

1. "An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns," p. 33 (Manifold).

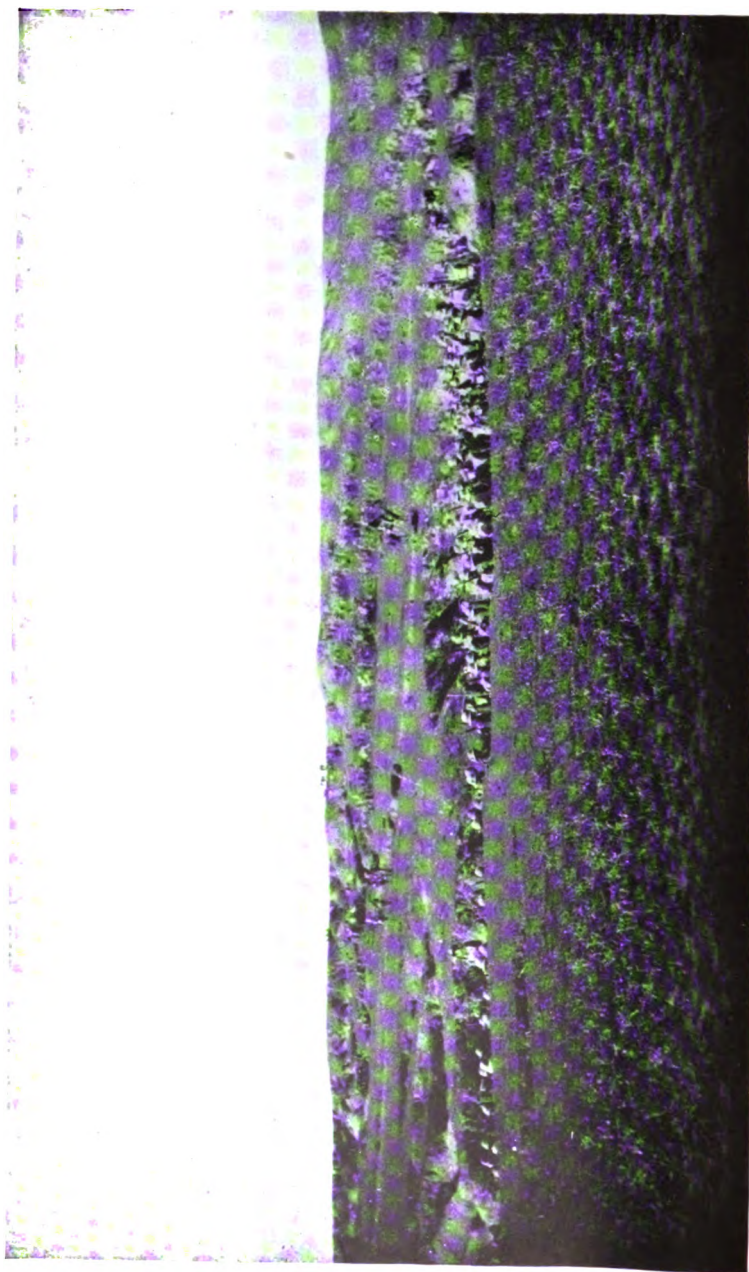
before deploying for attack. There was no shade and no water. Yet these four brigades pressed quietly and steadily on over that exposed plain, up that steep ridge and through that maze of cactus hedges, till an enemy whose skill and stoutness in defence are universally admitted gave way to them and yielded up his position. Little finesse was possible in this assault. Its success was a triumph for cool, practised platoon leading and for straightforward disciplined valour."

WITH THE ESSEX TERRITORIALS.

The Promised Land was entered on March 25th, by the old Cairo road, when the 161st Brigade, starting before dawn and halting during the day in concealment among the cactus hedges at Beni-Sela, reached In Seirat, a small village on the ridge of hills of that name, by 7.30. "The march of the Brigade on this day," wrote an Essex sergeant, "was a sight worthy of a film picture. The four battalions were in column of route, each unit being abreast at an interval of about 200 to 300 yards, with stores and ammunition in between on camels. Despatch riders on motor cycles rode across from column to column, keeping touch. The Brigade moved across open fertile country, dotted here and there with a farm or a small Arab settlement." Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, 1/5th Essex, whose battalion, with the 1/4th, had been warned for outpost duty and who had reached In Seirat earlier, thus describes the magnificent view: "To our left front lay the fertile plain, green with barley, the old Cairo road stretching on towards Gaza, which lay in a heat haze about six miles to the north. Below us the Wadi Ghazze wound its way across our front to the sea on the left. The two domes of Sheikh Nebhan shone white in the surrounding green. The steep cliffs of the Wadi made black shadows on the stony bed, now dry, but recently washed by the rains from the hills. To our left and slightly behind us on the edge of the sand dunes lay the village of Deir el Balah, the southern outpost of the Crusaders, and, beyond, the blue expanse of the sea. Occasional rifle shots indicated that the cavalry were already in touch with the enemy. We could see the horses of the patrols taking cover behind the rocks. Very dimly in the distance could be discerned wheeled traffic moving along the Gaza-Beersheba road. The prominent bluff of Ali el Muntar, crowned with its mosque, commanded the whole plain, a natural outpost of this land of the Philistines. Well might the early Mohammedans call Gaza 'Dehliz el Moulk,' the 'Threshold of the Kingdom.'" One battalion, 1/4th Essex, was later deemed sufficient to occupy the outpost line. No fires or lights of any sort were permitted after 5.30 p.m. until 5.30 the next morning; thus the troops rested, for it was known that fighting was in prospect on the morrow. Meanwhile, the officers gleaned what information they could concerning the defences of Gaza, the key of which was the ridge to the south-east known as Ali el



Approaching Gaza, 5th Essex breakfasting at EL SIRE.



5th Essex approaching Mansura Ridge "Jumping off place." 161st Brigade staff on Ridge.

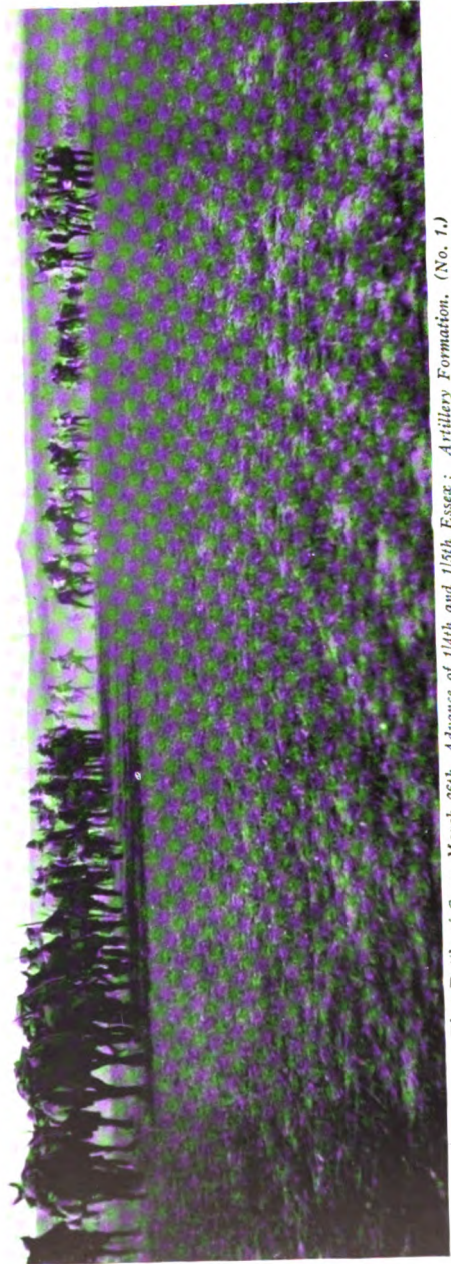
Muntar, with other points nearby later to become familiar as "The Warren," "Green Hill" and "The Labyrinth." Air photographs showed that entrenched positions had been dug all round the city, but the line was not continuous. The only map used was that of the Conder-Kitchener Survey in 1878, for the more detailed and up-to-date maps were not issued until just prior to the Second Battle of Gaza. The 53rd Division was entrusted with the assault and the infantry of the 161st Brigade, with the 486th Field Company, R.E., and a portion of the 1/3rd East Anglian Field Ambulance, had been directed to move at 6 a.m. on March 26th to the Tomb of Sheikh Nebhan, in support of the assaulting brigade.

The troops were early on the move. The sleep of the 161st Brigade was broken by the passage of cavalry and artillery. During the night came a thick fog and the Brigade experienced difficulty in following through the green corn the track of the troops to Sheikh Nebhan. The sun was well up ere the Brigade reserve, 1/4th Essex, was in movement, and the men caught a glimpse of the white towers and minarets of Gaza, peaceful and pretty in the morning light. After a short halt orders came at 8.45 a.m. for the group, now reinforced by the 271st Brigade, R.F.A., to march to El Burjabye, under cover of Mansura Ridge. The Brigade reached its second position at about 10 a.m. and came under the fire of Turkish artillery, whilst enemy aeroplanes soared high overhead. To the left could be heard the sound of the fighting in which the 53rd Division were engaged. In intense heat, by way of a wadi, the Brigade moved nearer to the Ridge, in response to instructions received at 1.10 p.m., under cover of a battery of the 271st Brigade, and there the infantry suffered their first casualties in Palestine from enemy shellfire.

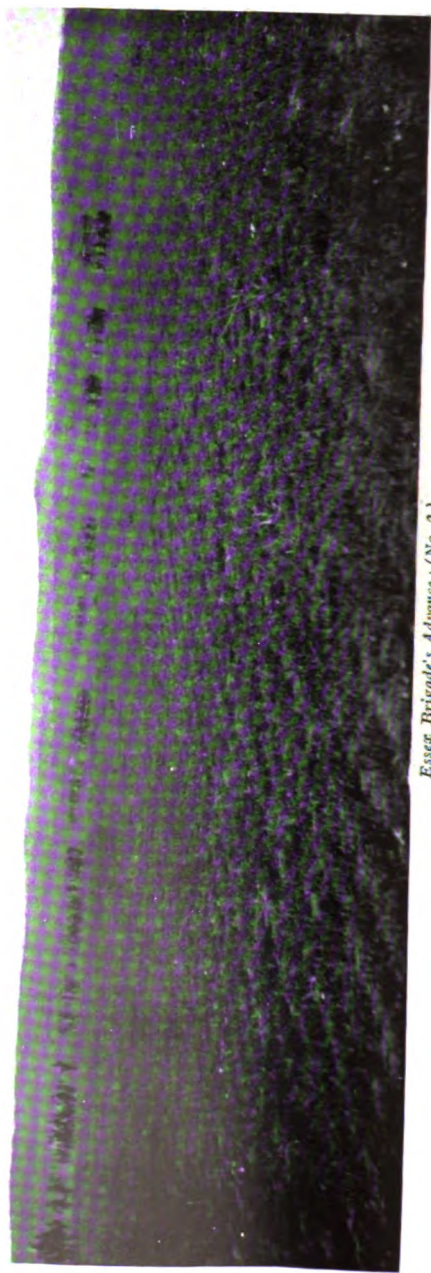
"The night of March 25th-26th," wrote an Essex officer, "was very cold. The 1/4th were outpost battalion to the Brigade. The platoons were posted well out in front in the darkness and there was great difficulty in finding the positions owing to the heavy mist. The grass was wet with dew; there were no blankets and the men were in drill tunics and shorts. They lay on their waterproof sheets and used their haversacks for pillows, but they were frozen with the cold. We moved off in rear of the Brigade next morning after breakfast and marched along the Wadi Ghazze. There was some shelling, but there were few casualties. We saw several Turks observing us, but we arrived at Mansura without incident, though we suffered much from thirst. The men wore full packs and the officers were differently garbed, so that it was possible to recognize them. That was altered in the third battle, when all ranks were dressed alike. The water bottles had been filled the previous evening, but most of them were emptied as we toiled through the wadi. At Mansura Ridge we piled arms and a well 200 yards in the rear proved a great temptation to the men, though drinking therefrom was forbidden for fear

it had been poisoned ; those that did drink, however, suffered no ill effects. Whilst we were waiting I remember a little incident which created a pleasant surprise. Captain Bell, who fell later, brought out twenty or thirty Gold Flake cigarettes which he had obtained from a staff captain. These he distributed amongst us and we sat down and had a smoke whilst Colonel Jameson, with the other battalion commanders, was with the Brigadier. When he came back he immediately asked for the company commanders, whom he greeted with the remark, 'Thank God, we have a show at last !' We were taken to the Ridge to observe the objective, the whole of the preliminary arrangements being carried out at top speed."

Whilst the 161st Brigade was concentrating at Mansura, the G.O.C. 53rd Division issued orders that the Brigade, less one battalion, was to attack and carry the hill, known as Green Hill, just south-west of Ali el Muntar, in the gap between the 158th Brigade on the right and the 160th Brigade on the left. It was thought the effort would prove sufficiently powerful to cause the enemy to abandon Ali el Muntar and thus open the way to Gaza. Shortly before 4 o'clock the battalion commanders conferred with the Brigadier and the objective was outlined. The Turks were holding on to the centre, but with their flanks pushed back by the advance of the brigades of the 53rd Division. The position to be taken lay plain to the view in the distance, the flanks being natural objects standing out clearly on the skyline. The peak of Ali el Muntar was the limit on the right ; the sandy hill by the Labyrinth, then known as Brown Hill, on the left. Green Hill lay at a lower altitude in the centre, with a lone tree stump upon it to direct the march of the inner flanks of the two leading battalions. The knowledge of the Turkish defences was scanty and much was left to the initiative and resource of the officers when the attack had been launched. The numerical strength of the enemy in the assailed position was not known. The Turkish line was later found not to have been continuous, but consisted of fortified sections, well wired, with deep pits excavated in front. It was an ideal position for the defending machine gunner, for he had a mile and a half of plain lying straight before him, with little obstruction to view, and he could easily maintain his traverse. Many of the machine gun positions were perfectly constructed, so deep from back to front that only at the shortest range could a bullet reach the guns or teams. It was the machine gunfire which, in fact, caused most of the casualties to the Brigade, for, as with the attacking infantry, so with the defenders, artillery did not play a prominent part in this phase of the operation. For some unknown reason, artillery support (though asked for) was not given until just prior to the final assault, when (after repeated requests by Brigade headquarters) a few howitzer rounds were directed on Green Hill. Organized artillery support might have enabled Green Hill to be taken half an hour earlier (time was of vital importance with dusk approaching), but it



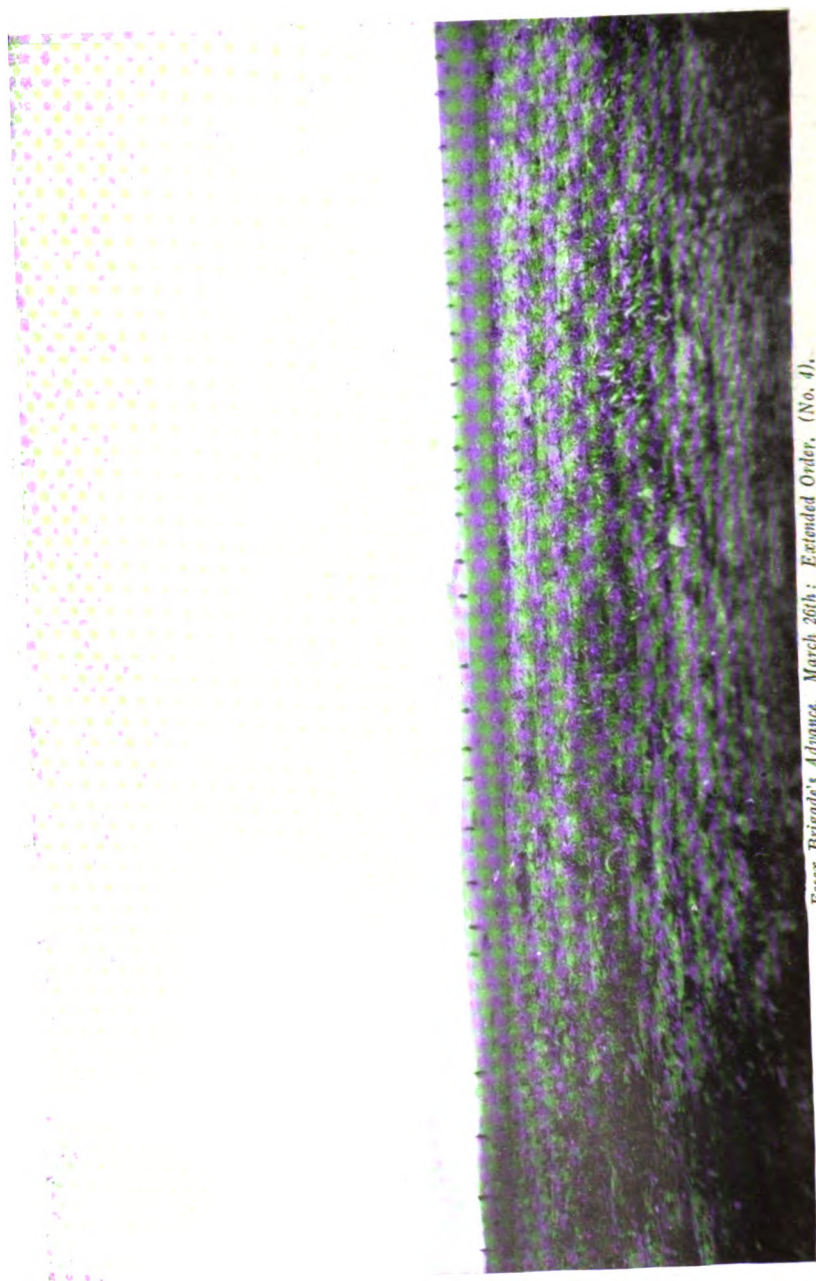
First Battle of Gaza, March 26th, Advance of 14th and 15th Essex : Artillery Formation. (No. 1.)



Essex Brigade's Advance : (No. 2.)



Essex Brigade's Advance : March 26th, (No. 3).



Essex Brigade's Advance, March 26th: Extended Order. (No. 4).

would also have kept down the casualties. The Turkish artillery was silent and the defenders would have been demoralized by a well-sustained fire. The taking of the position would consequently have become much less expensive in soldiers' lives.¹

The 1/4th and 1/5th Essex were entrusted with the attack, each with a section of the Machine Gun Company. Two companies of the 1/6th Essex were in support, with the remainder of the Machine Gun Company. The other two companies were in brigade reserve and the 1/7th Essex were in divisional reserve. Brigade headquarters followed the attack for about a thousand yards and then took up a position on the open plain with the last two companies of the 6th Essex. The advance was made most methodically and in perfect order, as if upon peace manoeuvres. The 4th Essex had two companies in front, with the third and fourth companies constituting the second and third lines. The 5th had two companies in front and two in rear in similar alignment. They were in line of platoons, which split into line of sections when the enemy machine guns opened about a mile from the objective, and very shortly afterwards to extended order at three paces interval. At a fast pace, almost a run, the long line unwaveringly pressed on until, after a pause to gather strength and cohesion for the last effort, and in unison with two companies of the 6th Essex, the Turkish trenches in the centre were occupied with a rush at about 5.30 p.m. During the advance the right of the 1/4th Essex passed through details of the 53rd Division. The Brigade suffered severe casualties, chiefly from close range machine gunfire. Lieut.-Colonel Jameson, commanding the 1/4th, was mortally wounded when about 200 yards from Green Hill, and Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, commanding the 1/5th, was wounded in the thigh soon after the advance commenced. As the latter lay upon the ground he heard the monotonous tat-tat of the machine gun fire—for it was the Turkish custom to fire through the ammunition belts without check—mingled with bursts from the Lewis guns, and then “at last I heard a cheer—and then another and another—and I knew that victory was won.”

The earlier stages of the attack by the 53rd Division and the splendid advance of the Essex Territorial Infantry were witnessed by an Essex officer, then with the remainder of the 54th Division on Sheikh Abbas Ridge. He wrote: “We had an easy time that day, but the hours were full of absorbing interest. The ridge commanded a fine view of the long, flat stretch of country up to the outskirts of Gaza. Over this ground during the afternoon we saw the advance of the 53rd Division, long lines of men moving slowly and steadily forward in the early stages of the action. From our natural amphitheatre they could be followed, with the help of field glasses, up to where the fleecy

1. The 271st (Essex) Artillery Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel R. M. Laurie) was attached to the 161st Brigade in the early part of the day, but at 2.30 p.m. or thereabouts was sent to assist the advance of the 159th Brigade against Clay Hill (See “Romford to Beirut”).

clouds of the shrapnel bursts were thick enough to show that further advance from this point could only be made by short rushes and the employment of all available cover. We could see nothing of this latter stage and could only conjecture its progress by the frequent rise and fall in the volume of the continuous rifle fire. The advance went on for several hours—until 4 p.m.—and the fascination of it held our attention; long lines of little figures moving forward at a slow walk. After 5 p.m. the last line had gone over and no further movement could be seen, but the volume of rifle fire increased and diminished much more rapidly. The struggle for the defences was at its height. Shortly after this, one of us, searching the ground thoroughly with powerful glasses, and paying especial attention to a commanding hill near which much firing appeared to centre, was able to observe the final stages of the attack. The light was failing and the troops were too far off to permit of anything but a general impression being gained. The men were obviously making splendid use of the cover available. At frequent intervals a small portion of the line would surge forward a short distance and then melt again into invisibility. The last scene, although much more difficult to follow, was even more fascinating than the advance of the 53rd Division. We were seeing the final stages of the assault, watching men who were at close grips with the enemy. We saw the progress of this determined attack until darkness and the receipt of orders to move to fresh positions prevented further observation. Afterwards, when our diaries could be compared with the official report of the battle and its course traced out on the map, we were able to identify the distant figures pushing home a determined attack in the final daylight hours with the Essex Brigade of our Division. In estimating the character of the work done by the Essex men, it must be remembered that the Division had not been much engaged with the enemy for over a year, and although the efficiency of the troops had been carefully fostered and improved during this period, there were considerable numbers of men who had not yet been in action. Any doubts as to the power of these troops to conduct successfully an arduous attack were set at rest for those who had the good fortune to witness its being carried out. It is true that we were a long distance away, but the inevitable loss of detail involved permitted us to gain a clearer perspective of the attack as a whole. An individual in an attacking force is unable to obtain more than a limited impression of the events in his immediate neighbourhood. We, in our distant and detached position, were able to follow the assault of the whole Essex Brigade and it left us with a lasting impression of skill and courage."

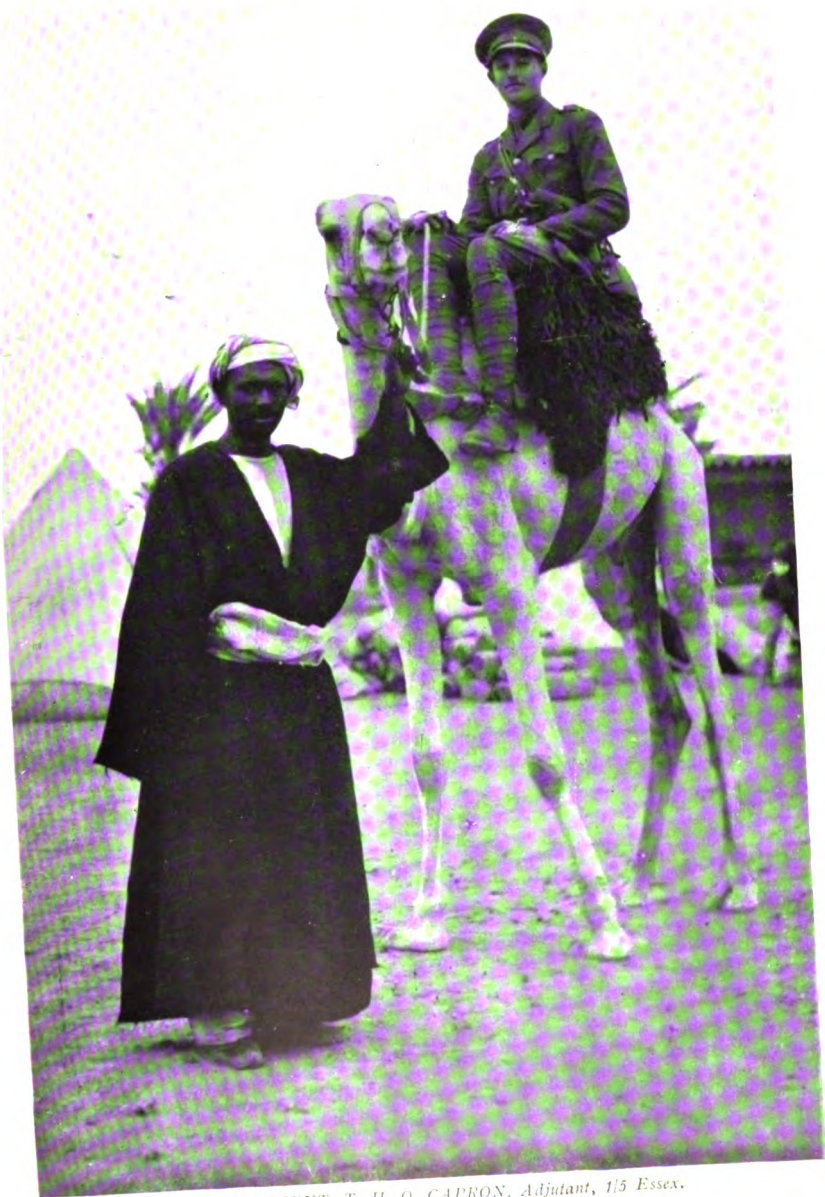
The splendidly cool and methodical advance, perfectly conducted, was the subject of appreciative comment in all quarters. Another officer serving with the 161st Brigade wrote: "The Battalions did not rest at any time during the attack. When

the hostile machine gun fire opened, both the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex quickly broke up from artillery formation into extended order, the forward movement being unchecked during this process. The attack was then pressed home with exceptional celerity and in perfect drillbook fashion, platoons supporting each other as those in the rear closed up. Although the casualties were heavy, it is the general opinion that they must have been heavier still but for the swift and determined advance of the Brigade through what was nothing less than a hurricane of machine gun fire." Another onlooker, with the Signal Company, also describes the attack: "Our headquarters were in a gully just below a large flat plain across which the Essex advanced under a terrific machine gun and rifle fire. It was a stirring and splendid sight. They behaved just as if they were taking part in a field day scheme at home and not a man faltered. They started in company columns, which rapidly split up into small groups, which, in turn, spread out until they were in long single lines advancing across the plain towards Green Hill, which was their objective. As they neared the hill they fixed bayonets and charged, taking the hill in just under an hour from the commencement of the attack, but, unfortunately, they suffered rather heavily from machine guns. . . . The enemy had a clean sweep over the plain and the hideous tat-tat seemed almost incessant. Of all the horrible sounds of war, I think the devilish tat-tat of a Maxim is the most fear-inspiring. There is something vicious in its rattle which goes straight to the heart. Rifle fire is altogether different—it has a dull rolling sound—but clear and sharp above it are the spiteful bursts of machine gun fire. Perhaps a gunner will be content with spurts of four or five shots as he searches the enemy, then there comes burr, burr, burr, as a whole belt of ammunition goes through at a target which suddenly presents itself. . . . Through all this infernal racket the ration and ammunition camels preserved a stoical calm and did not turn a hair. It is really comical to see the air of surprised interest with which they look upon a bursting shell and when they are hit they lie down without a grunt and hand in their cheeks. Indeed, they are said to be able to lie down and die at will if they get too 'fed up' with their unenviable life. Still, they did good work in bringing up water, etc., and did not flinch from their steady, serene plodding when the convoy was under fire. Whilst gun teams, signal wagons and 'backsheesh' horses were rushing madly about, perhaps dragging a dying horse in the traces, these much maligned but useful animals came steadily on." Then with a spice of sardonic humour, the writer concluded with a reference to the Crusaders, for, noting he was posting his letter on Good Friday, he remarked, "Quite an appropriate place to spend Easter, isn't it? We are, I suppose, something like the old Crusaders. We have much the same objective, only fighting conditions have altered since those days. I wonder what those noble old knights would have thought if it were

possible to have suddenly dumped them into our place during the recent battle. What would they have thought of the hellish machine guns, H.E. shells, shrapnel and all the rest of it? And would they not have been mildly surprised at aeroplanes and tanks? Perhaps they'd feel pretty safe in their helmets and breast-plates—miniature walking tanks they must have been. The infamous poison gas, though, would have completed their belief that they were in Hades itself."

Although the frontage of the objective, approximately half a mile, stretched from Ali el Muntar to Brown Hill, the line of attack contracted as losses occurred and the machine gun fire smote the troops. The right flank, which was directed upon the white mosque on Ali el Muntar, was protected by Lewis guns whose teams were ordered to deal with Turkish machine guns located behind some cactus just slightly to the right of the mosque. The right flank tended to move towards the centre and this impulse was strengthened by the fact that there was a re-entrant between Ali el Muntar and Green Hill. As a consequence, when the final movement took place the remnants of the 4th Essex had swung round somewhat towards the left face of Green Hill and were in close contact with the centre. It was there the Essex Territorials came up against the core of the resistance, and it was there, too, occurred that involuntary move forward, without word of command, which won the position and determined the issue of that day's fighting.

The advance of the centre companies of the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex was rapid and unhesitating. "Mansura Ridge," wrote Captain Bittles, "was about 30ft. high and was not easy of ascent, but I remember Colonel Jameson doubled up it in his eagerness as he urged us on. He had no fixed headquarters, but moved between the firing line and supports. The attack was absolutely as laid down in the drill book. We had practised the movement so often on the Canal that we could extend with the utmost precision, the men being hardly a fraction of a foot out in their intervals. When we reached the plateau we extended and were met with terrific rifle and machine gun fire. There was not a particle of cover, the ground being like a billiard table. The Lewis gun mules were hit and the men took the weapons and ammunition forward by hand. There was some shrapnel at the commencement; but later it was all machine gun and rifle fire; it came like peas at you. By the time the front companies had got within 150 yards of Green Hill the support companies had closed up. Within 100 yards of the trenches I was hit and could not go on, but I could see what was happening ahead. When the long lines were close to the Turkish wire they found a shred of cover caused by a slight rise. It was very slight, but it was just sufficient to protect them from fire." Lying in the centre of the attacking line was Harvey Capron, adjutant of the 5th Essex, who had played his part with the greatest zest and eagerness. Near by him was Captain Colvin, of "C" Company,



The late **LIEUT. T. H. O. CAPRON**, Adjutant, 1/5 Essex.

with a sergeant and one or two others. The line thickened as the supports came in and then Capron said to his colleague that the time had come to take the trenches. He made a movement as if to rise, which, apparently, was instantly detected by a Turkish sniper and he was shot through the heart. The sergeant had barely time to call Captain Colvin's attention to the casualty, when, as if animated by the dead officer's resolve, the whole line rose and went through the Turkish wire into the trenches. The men of the two companies of the 6th Essex, hurrying up to the fray, had just time to reach the firing line when the forward move began, and they gave impetus to the last decisive rush. The Turks, already withdrawing, left hurriedly. A few brave men remained and were bayoneted as they stood, whilst others were shot down as they ran down the communication trenches. "The barbed wire," wrote Captain Bittles, who was watching this final episode, "was a great trouble, for men were caught in it and killed whilst extricating themselves. 'Dicky' Richardson behaved most gallantly; he was last seen in the barbed wire firing his revolver at the Turks. Colonel Jameson met a brave man's end. The ardour of the advance took him to within two hundred yards of Green Hill, carrying a rifle and bayonet, when he was shot down. As he lay desperately wounded, he refused to let R.S.M. Howard do anything for him until everyone else in the vicinity had been looked after. He said, 'You can do nothing for me; look after the others.' Happily we were able to move him, but he died next day. The second-in-command (Major Barrington Wells) was hit in the arm early on, but, nevertheless, carried on until after the trenches were taken; all the company commanders went down. Gidley dashed forward and no one heard of him again. I had a curious experience when wounded. I was hit in the arm and another bullet struck my haversack, perforating a tin of cigarettes, a bottle of jam and a Field Service Pocket Book. You can appreciate what a mixture there was when it was opened later on. Another officer had a shot through his field glasses and yet another through his water bottle." Among other gallant incidents was that of Sergeant Nye, of "B" Company, 4th Essex, who later fell at the Third Battle of Gaza. He led his section in the rush at Green Hill and came up against a huge Turk, unarmed, who still showed signs of fight. Dropping his rifle, Nye fought it out with his fists and overcame his adversary. After the final charge, the adjutant (Captain Lee) took command of the 4th Essex and later received orders to report to Colonel Bowker, 1/6th Essex, who had come up in support with the third company.

The attack in the centre was also described by Sergeant W. White, of 1/4th Essex. "Someone shouts 'Slope-arms!'" "Slope-arms, be damned," says someone else. "Fix bayonets and load." This sounds like business and over the ridge we go, neck and barrel, Lewis guns on mules and all. We open out to artillery formation when well on the other side of the ridge,

confronted by a wide open plain, about 3,000 yards forward, ending on the skyline with a small mound (Green Hill) and in a large one on the right (Ali el Muntar). Of the enemy we see nothing at all. It seems clear, open country ; but very soon we hear crack, pop, pop, plop, and we deploy. We advance in short rushes and as the attack develops rapid fire is the order. Men drop on every hand. Groans and yells are mingled with the tremendous din of machine gun and rifle fire. The air becomes pungent with burning explosive. The Turk sticks close and his machine guns mow us down, but he cannot stop us, for our depleted ranks are as rapidly reinforced. We reach a slight rise just under their trip wire, which protected trenches that we never dreamt were there. As the second attacking wave reaches us, shouting 'Charge! Charge!!' we get up again and with British cheers we leap the barbed wire and are in their trenches."

The left of the 1/5th kept resolutely upon its objective, the Brown Hill, on the skyline. The bulk of "D" Company, when they entered the trenches, found a series of broken gullies and on the top of the farther rise were men of the Royal Sussex Regiment, who had been holding on since early morning. They had suffered severe losses from what they thought to be minnenwerfer fire, but Major Wilson was inclined to think that 5.9. H.E. was responsible. The enemy put down a barrage from these guns just as the objective was reached by the 5th Essex on Brown Hill, but fortunately the range was just too long to do much injury, though it caused casualties among the last men in. From that point patrols were sent out to ascertain the enemy's whereabouts and touch was sought with the companies on the right. In the centre of the objective of the 1/5th Essex was a small stone hut and this proved a great attraction, for it was the focus of enemy resistance. Three platoons of "B" and "D" Companies concentrated there, suffering considerable casualties in so doing, for at least one machine gun, resolutely handled, operated therefrom. They got within fifty yards of the structure, when further progress was stayed. Captain J. F. Finn, then commanding No. 5 platoon of "B" Company, recalls, "I straightened out the line, but many more men were hit as the bullets continued to fall about us like hail. Windsor (2nd Lieut.) called out to me that he was hit, so did Gilmore (2nd Lieut.), who was some way off. Not only did he give this information, but he shouted out the details ; this despite the fact that he dared not move for fear of being hit again and that the engagement was continuing vigorously. A few minutes later Womersley (signalling officer), who was near me on the left, got up and said that he was going to try and get in telephonic communication with the gunners to see if they could fire on to the stone hut. This was very desirable, as in this part of the line we had had no artillery support during the operation. Womersley, I heard afterwards, only got a little way before being hit twice. Those of us who were not wounded kept up a brisk fire in an

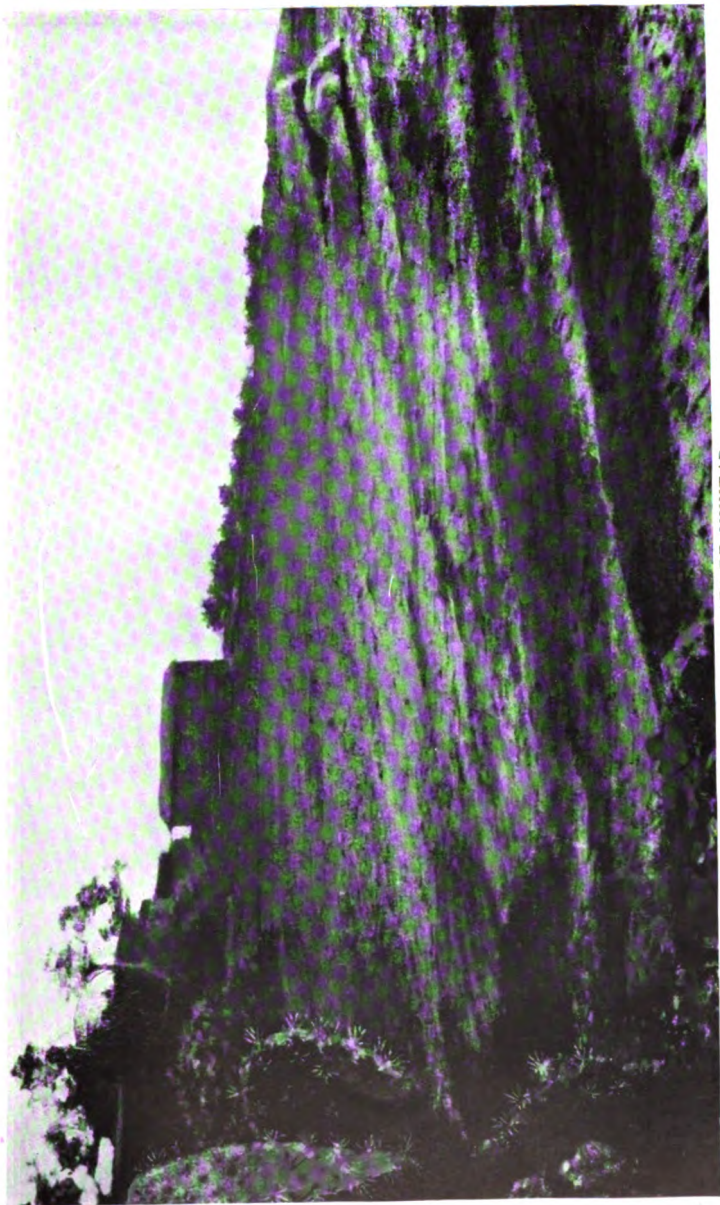
endeavour to get shots in the windows of the hut, but we were not in a position to do much. I sent a man back to battalion headquarters to report, but discovered afterwards that, owing to casualties, it did not exist. A little while later we heard a loud cheer from the right. This it was afterwards discovered came from "A" and "C" Companies of the 1/5th, the remnant of the 1/4th and the three companies of the 1/6th, when they attacked the works with the bayonet and captured the Green Hill defences. Following this, the Turkish fire ceased and doubtless those on our immediate front retired owing to the fall of Green Hill. Darkness fell and we commenced to dig in. Whilst this was being done Lieut. Calverley came along and volunteered to take a small patrol to the front. This he did and returned later with three Bedouins, whom he had taken prisoner, and also reported he had proceeded well to our front without observing any body of the enemy. Our work of entrenching continued as a reply to my message to battalion headquarters was awaited. It was done to a most heart-rending accompaniment of groans and cries from the wounded, who were lying, it seemed, everywhere. No one could be spared to take these poor fellows back and no stretchers were there even if this could have been possible. The R.A.M.C. arrangements were inadequate for a sudden advance over practically two miles of open country." "The heavy casualties of March 26th were mainly caused by the steady fire of three Turkish machine guns and one automatic rifle," wrote an officer, "but it was their protected position and perfect lateral field for cross fire that made the effect so deadly. This fact was proved by the number of men hit below the chest in the course of the advance."

As night fell, therefore, the whole of the defensive position on the south-eastern side of Gaza was in the hands of the British troops. The 1/4th, the 1/5th and three companies of the 1/6th occupied Green Hill, and the survivors were busily employed in adapting the trenches on the crest facing Gaza for the purposes of defence. The remaining company of the 1/6th Essex was brought up and Colonel Bowker, commanding that Battalion, took charge of the line. The 1/7th Essex were retained in divisional reserve at Mansura. Several patrols were sent out to feel for the enemy. Lieut. Harold Durell, 1/6th Essex, who led one of these parties, writes: "When we settled down in the Turkish positions my left was on the track, which, upon the map, runs nearly due north from the 'R' in Mansura Ridge. In the night my patrol went out along the track due north towards Gaza. We left the track once to examine a Turkish camp on the west and returned to the track again at its northern end. I have a distinct recollection then of passing buildings and at the time I had no doubt that I had reached the outskirts of Gaza. I should not like to say after all this time how far north we patrolled from our posts in the old Turkish line, but if I had to guess at it I should put it at about half a mile. Looking at my route by the map,

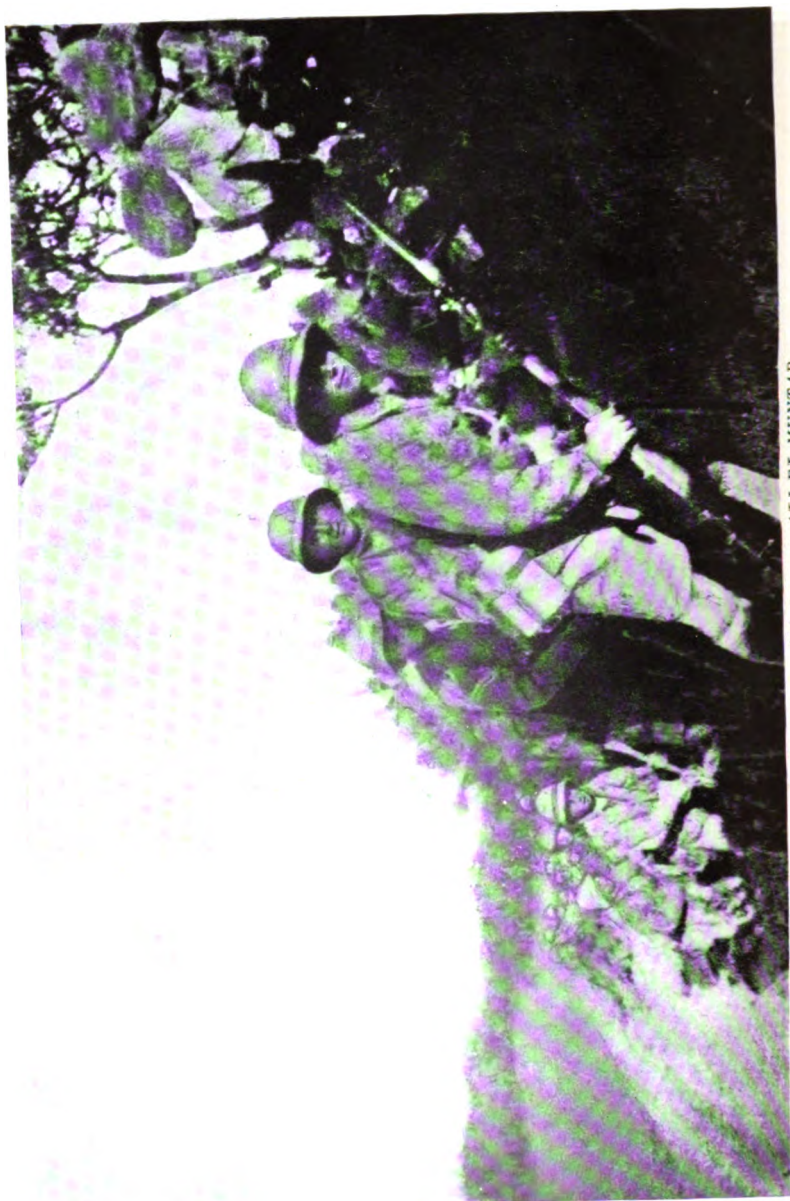
it seems probable that I skirted the south-eastern edge of Gaza."

There was much uncertainty concerning the situation after the advance at Brigade headquarters and considerable time elapsed before information was procured. The battalions were lying in detached groups in the enemy's position and communication was difficult. An officer of the 1/5th (Captain Finn) had dug in near the stone hut, when "an orderly reached our lines and said that the Brigadier desired to speak on the telephone to an officer. I went back with him for what seemed a very considerable distance to where the signallers had had to make their station owing to coming to the end of their cable. General Dodington was at the other end, most anxious to obtain information from the attacking units. I reported the situation in my sector and what I had gathered of the position on the left, for Major Wilson had just previously sent a message along to 'B' Company, and my deductions of success on the right (Green Hill), judging by the cheers and the immediate cessation of the enemy fire which followed." Lack of communication with Brigade headquarters was not only due to insufficient signal cable, but to casualties among officers in battalion headquarters of all the units taking part in the attack. In this respect, the battles differed from those in which the Brigade subsequently took part. Owing to the unexpectedly rapid movement into action, the whole of the personnel went forward and, therefore, no cadre of officers, N.C.O.'s and men was left behind to replace casualties; the battalion headquarters were not in the rear under cover, from which the necessary tactical orders could be issued and to which reports could be sent. This led to serious losses among the senior officers and staff of the respective headquarters and in one case the orderly room sergeant was killed and some important returns which were to be forwarded to G.H.Q., 3rd Echelon, Egypt, which he had in his pack, were lost.

There was an atmosphere of expectancy and exultation upon the hilltop. The enemy's chief defences had been occupied and it was known that upon this particular part of the front they were defeated and despondent. "It was pretty evident," wrote Major Wilson, then in command of the 1/5th Essex, "that we had the Turks beat; standing on the Brown Hill we could plainly hear the rumble of wheels and hubbub of excitement rising from the town. The Turks were undoubtedly withdrawing with all the speed they could and our patrols encountered no opposition, although they penetrated almost to the town itself." For reasons given above, the order to advance never came. Instead, during the evening the commander of the 161st Brigade was instructed to evacuate the position which had been won. General Dodington proceeded about 10 p.m. to Green Hill and issued such instructions as were possible to Colonel Bowker (1/6th Essex), then in command of the front line. The transfer of the wounded and the reorganization of the units for the withdrawal was laborious and difficult. All was ready, however, by midnight.



The Mosque on ALI EL MUNTAR.



First Battle of Gaza : 16th Essex on ALI EL MUNTAK,

A party of the 1/5th Essex rendered valuable assistance to the Royal Sussex in removing their wounded from the Labyrinth. The 1/7th Essex provided the outpost line, roughly half-way between Mansura Ridge and Green Hill, with "C" Company on the right, then "B" Company, and "A" Company on the left. "D" Company, in support, spent the night hours collecting the wounded and clearing the battlefield. The other battalions went back to Mansura Ridge, a movement which was completed by 5 a.m. on March 27th. The water camels of the 1/4th Essex arrived at midnight and provided welcome refreshment to the men of several units, especially the wounded.

Meanwhile, General Dodington had interviewed the divisional commander and permission had been readily accorded that patrols should go forward at dawn and if the position was unoccupied, it was to be re-established. Accordingly, reconnoitring parties of the 1/7th were sent out and upon their reporting that both Green Hill and Ali el Muntar were free of the enemy, the Battalion immediately re-entered the positions. "C" Company (Captain G. Jones) was at Ali el Muntar, "B" Company (Captain R. A. Stubbings) in the Warren, "A" Company (Captain E. Whur, M.C.) on Green Hill and "D" Company (Captain J. Schofield, M.C.) in the Labyrinth. Owing to the non-arrival of transport camels, the Battalion had to move with empty water bottles. During the advance to the position the Battalion encountered rifle fire from each flank, but this did not interfere with their progress. The Turks, who had opened with shrapnel from the British left, appeared in some force soon after dawn and retook a portion of the trenches on Green Hill, and the whole of Ali el Muntar, but they were quickly ejected, the arrival of the 1/6th Essex, with No. 1 Section, 161st Machine Gun Company, re-establishing the situation. "A" Company (Captain Tee), of the latter Battalion, led the march and as they reached Ali el Muntar, so the Turks retired through the cactus bushes. "B" Company (Captain Sheldon) reinforced "A" Company, whilst "C" Company (Captain Rayner) was directed upon Green Hill and "D" Company (Captain H. F. Silverwood) upon the Labyrinth. The 1/4th and 1/5th Essex, sadly reduced, were in the neighbourhood of Mansura Ridge. As daylight strengthened, large numbers of troops were observed to be entering Gaza from the north-east, but it could not be determined with certainty whether they were Turks or the Imperial Mounted Division, which was known to be operating in that direction. These movements were also the subject of comment at Brigade headquarters. An artillery battery galloped into range and opened fire, but unfortunately was peremptorily recalled and a great opportunity was lost. About 9 a.m. Colonel Delamare (1/7th Essex) informed General Dodington that all was quiet. At 9.45 a.m., however, a strong enemy attack developed in the direction of Ali el Muntar. A more extended movement from the Beersheba Road, through a cactus garden, threatening

communication between the 1/6th and 1/7th Essex and Brigade, caused some anxiety. The commanding officers of the 1/6th and 1/7th Battalions felt quite capable of holding their own, but from Brigade headquarters at Mansura Ridge their position seemed precarious. Authority for a counter-attack was accordingly asked for from divisional headquarters and the 158th Brigade were moving forward in response when their advance was stopped and it subsequently transpired that the operation was cancelled. This uncertainty added to the anxiety with which the situation of the two Battalions on Green Hill and Ali el Muntar was watched. The battalion commanders were ordered to withdraw when they were convinced of the necessity, though it transpired later that the former had no doubt of their ability to maintain their positions. As the morning wore on the bulk of the 1/6th and 1/7th Essex, threatened with encirclement, retired from Green Hill in a south-westerly direction by way of Middlesex Hill, Outpost Hill, the eastern slope of Blazed Hill and Queen's Hill. They finally concentrated in Happy Valley, taking up position in the rear of the 1/4th and 1/5th. Before the withdrawal was accomplished there was some stiff fighting in the neighbourhood of Ali el Muntar, in which Captain Tee was killed. Captain Rayner fell as he was leaving a trench on Green Hill. Captain Silverwood had been mortally hit just before reaching the front line trenches. Thus three of the company commanders of the 6th Essex were killed on this fatal day. Enemy snipers and machine gunners were very active and they caused most of the casualties, though small detached parties of the 1/6th and 1/7th were later surrounded and made prisoners before orders for retirement reached them.

C.S.M. F. J. Rolph, of "A" Company, 6th Essex, tells in considerable detail the story of the day's eventful and tragic happenings: "About 6 a.m. we were issuing water, when Captain Tee rushed up and said, 'We have got to go up at once.' It seemed a great pity, for we were without water. Some poor beggars had drained their bottles in anticipation of getting them filled. Up we went and were soon moving over the plain which we had crossed the day before. There were a few shells about; also machine guns, but they did not do much damage. There were rows of casualties from the previous day, which seemed to be all from Welsh regiments—it was on the extreme right of our line. I don't think there were any Turks to stop us or they would have enfiladed us as we passed along in waves in front of their trenches. I saw Captain Tee to the left, so went over to him. He was standing under a tree, telling some men off for bunching just in front. We were held up for a while, as the artillery was shelling Mosque on the top of Ali el Muntar. Then we crossed the sunken road and waited behind a cactus hedge and it was at this spot that Lieut. R. E. Cook took the photographs which appear in this volume. When the shelling ceased, I pushed on with Lance-Corporal Barry, and explored a

trench on the right, by means of which we were the first at the Mosque. Seeing a little fort in front, we rushed over, but beyond machine guns we found nothing. When we got back to the Mosque men were put into the trench. Lance-Corporal Gibbs and a few men pushed after the Turks, who were located in some rows of cacti a few fields in front of us. I called him back, but he did not respond and it was the last I saw of him. The enemy were easily visible and we saw some of them go into Gaza itself, which lay to our left. After a while—I have no idea of time—we saw something which appeared to be sheep or goats coming over the hills from a direction which we later knew to be Beersheba. Then through glasses they were identified as troops, but we were uncertain of their nationality, some of us thinking they were Indians. The Turks in front waved a white flag, which we thought was in token of surrender, but it was probable they were signalling the oncoming Turks, concerning whom we were then under no illusions. Events moved rapidly and a written message came from Colonel Bowker, 'Withdraw fighting westward,' brought by Private Swift, to whom many of us owed our safety. It was high ground where we were and we could see right over the plain. There was a good deal of machine gun fire from the extreme left of the Turkish line, which caused casualties, among them Private Dick Freeman. Private G. Brazier was firing from behind a cactus hedge when a bullet came through one of the thick leaves and the juice spurted over his glasses. He had something very emphatic to say about the Turks. Another little incident I always remember when we were busy getting away. I noticed one private lying back in a trench pulling cactus thorns out of his knees. To get from the Mosque we had to cross the sunken road and it was there that poor old "A" Company and some of "B" Company, who had reinforced us, caught it, for I shall always believe 'Jacko' had a machine gun on the plain and another from the town trained on that spot. We went over one at a time and it was whilst standing on the other side that I saw the last of Lance-Corporal Skinner. We made our way along the Turkish front line trench for some way and then a few of us crossed over towards the sea—still inside the defences—and sheltered, as we thought, in some hollow ground, but soon found that the enemy had got the range, apparently with a machine gun from the Mosque. Several men were hit and some of us rushed out and after a time observed some of our troops holding a hill (Queen's Hill) on our half right. I made my way over and found a line composed of Essex and 53rd Division. It was a good job we left the trench when we did, for most of those who remained there were either killed or captured. The Turks sprayed us with shrapnel and as I had not an entrenching implement, I lay in a little gully. It was funny, but on the plain the previous day I had waited on the wounded for one. I got one, but gave it away and could not get another. Leather equipment was scarce. The Turks did not seem inclined

to attack, so the order was given 'Essex get back to Mansura.' Back we went—hot, tired and thirsty. I ran across Colonel Bowker, who took the saddle off a Lewis gun mule and rode it. Presently we saw a crowd round a well, who called us over. Found they were Essex, who were lowering mess tins on puttees and fetching up dirty, muddy water. I filled myself until I bubbled over. We then reached Mansura and found the 5th holding the line across the plain. There Colonel Bowker organized us into two companies."

The action of Colonel Bowker in organizing a line of resistance upon Lees Hill and Queen's Hill was a notable exhibition of prompt judgment and resolution. The retiring companies, disordered by the nature of the ground, suffering severely from thirst, and without knowledge of the actual position of affairs, save that the troops were withdrawing, were rallied by the stubborn Colonel and so disposed as to present a fighting front to the Turk, should he decide to continue his advance. The enemy contented himself with the occupation of his old positions and so Colonel Bowker's new line was not tested, but it none the less had the effect of maintaining cohesion at a critical time.

Orders had been received, meanwhile, to prolong the defensive line which was being established to the left of the 158th Brigade facing north-east from Mansura Ridge to Queen's Hill. The 1/4th Battalion had their right on Mansura and held the shorter line, which was continued on the left by the 1/5th Essex. The 1/4th Battalion, then commanded by Captain Lee, had been reorganized into two companies. The move to the new position was led by the Brigade Major (Major Wright), with 2nd Lieut. G. M. Gibson as pivot. The men extended to three paces right and left of this officer, but the interval was not sufficient to cover the frontage and it was increased to five paces. The 1/5th, with a strength of about 250, had three companies—"B" (Archer); "C" with part of "D" (Colvin), and rest of "D" with remains of "A" and headquarters (Carlyon Hughes). "B" and "C" were in the front line under Captain Deakin, with part of "D," with Lewis guns, 300 yards in rear, in support, and a few hundred yards farther back, about thirty to forty men, comprising headquarters and details. As the afternoon wore on stragglers passed through who had been captured by the Turks and then released after having been deprived of their clothing, and about 5 p.m., uneasy as to his left flank, Major Wilson moved the Lewis guns there. Between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. a heavy fire was opened upon the two Battalions, the anxiety of the 1/4th being intensified by the fact that small arms ammunition was scarce. A party of about 200 Turks delivered an attack from the direction of Es Sire, many of them dressed in the pith helmet and service tunics of our own troops, apparently taken from the dead, and some of which were afterwards found to have Royal Sussex on the shoulder straps. They called out repeatedly "Essex. Essex!" and, when challenged, answered "Royal Essex," which

aroused immediate suspicion. They were then fired upon at close range and were speedily repulsed with a loss of over one hundred. A counter-attack was ordered on the left and an advance was made under a hot fire—at too great an elevation, however. Contact was not established with the Turks owing to darkness and the tired men returned to the front line without casualties. The whole of the Brigade were withdrawn at 11 p.m. to the old bivouac at In Seirat. The move was safely accomplished, though there was much anxiety at Brigade headquarters, because of the delay caused by the march of another brigade across the line of retirement. The 1/4th slipped off quietly at the command of Major Wright (Brigade Major) and the 1/5th promptly followed. The movement came to an end by daybreak on March 28th, after an arduous march, the men having great difficulty in not falling asleep. The remains of the 1/6th Essex covered the withdrawal. The only mishaps occurred to some of the Lewis gun sections of the leading units, which became detached from the column and encountered Turkish cavalry patrols, with whom they had had a running fight, but they safely reached In Seirat with the loss of a few mules. The men of the Battalions were without their packs and sundry articles of equipment, which they had dumped behind Mansura Ridge before going into action, and a new issue was made at In Seirat.

Commenting upon the operation, Brig.-General Dodington remarked that the behaviour of all ranks was admirable and the following message to the G.O.C. 54th Division conveyed Sir Archibald Murray's thanks: "Chief wishes to convey to all ranks under your command his great appreciation of their gallant conduct during the operations of the last two days. He considers the work of the mounted troops, including the Camel Corps, was excellent and wishes to congratulate 53rd Division and General Dodington's Brigade on the courage and determination with which the attack on the Ali Muntar position was carried out and the 54th Division on their steadiness and soldierly conduct." The commander of the 53rd Division (General Dallas) also tendered thanks to the brigadier "for the gallant part you and the Brigade played in completing the capture of the Ali el Muntar position on the 26th inst., in holding it, and effecting the retirement. It was great work and the pity is the unavoidable evacuation of what we had won on the 26th." In a private letter to Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, of the 1/5th Essex, Brigadier-General Dodington also wrote: "You do not know what I have felt about the Brigade; the attack on the 26th was absolutely beautiful, such precision, such drill and yet such dash. . . . What surprised me more than anything else the other day was the resource and skill of the officers and in very many cases the N.C.O.'s. . . . We had the Turks stone cold in Gaza on the night of the 26th and could have bagged the lot if only those higher placed had known as we knew. We had them, too, on the 27th, if only certain action had been taken."

The Brigadier-General also noted in his report that no rations reached the Brigade during the operations and much difficulty was experienced in obtaining water until the afternoon of the 27th. The explanation was that during the night the Brigade transport moved up, but progress in the pitch darkness was exceedingly slow and there was much congestion from the transport of other units. Moreover, the wadi crossings also caused much delay. Some were so deep that ramps had to be cut and the slopes were not easily negotiated in the darkness by heavily laden camels. The route was so blocked that at last it was found impossible to proceed and orders were given to return to In Seirat until dawn. In the morning rations were drawn at Tell el Jemmi on the Wadi Ghazze and a determined effort was made to reach the 161st Brigade. Passage through the 162nd and 163rd Brigades was slow because of heavy shelling, but the convoy reached Mansura Ridge at noon. Brigadier-General Dodington further reported: "The medical arrangements were quite inadequate. The evacuation of the wounded on the night of the 26th-27th had to be carried out almost entirely by reserve and other troops which could be got together, including 486th Company, R.E." This fact is also referred to by Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, of the 1/5th Essex, for he wrote, "Casualties were being removed with painful slowness and all cases who could possibly walk were told to clear as best they could. Evidently it was no good stopping where we were; wounded men were being killed by shrapnel as they lay in the open. The doctors were working heroically through it all." A member of the Signal Section referred to the Turkish shell-fire on the dressing station, which, he said, was searching for one of the batteries. Some of the wounded remained out all night, but were removed by convoy the next morning. As the available stretchers were inadequate to deal with the wounded, parties of men were told off to take charge of the rifles and thus relieve the rest of the men to help in removal, which was done by means of waterproof sheets. The night was pitch black and the task was most difficult. In some cases stretchers were improvised by putting rifles through the sleeves of service jackets. The pathos of the plight of the wounded in the Palestine campaign has been thus depicted:—

Wounded ! Not missing ! A lucky one !
Picked up—just at midnight—
Thirsting and shiv'ring, water quite done ;
Hit early in the big fight.
First, it was hot as we lay 'neath the sun,
Listening to the bullets' hum ;
Then it got cold as the stars, one by one,
Twinkled at us lying numb.¹

Within a week the railhead had reached Balah and soon there

1. From "Wounded," in "By Jaffa Way." (Lieut. H. G. Mansfield, M.C., Essex Regiment).

were Y.M.C.A. tents, canteens, hospitals—a great canvas town just behind the lines.

Incidents relating to the transport arrangements and the transfer of wounded from the front line are related by Lieut. P. H. Turner, M.C., of the 7th Essex, who was Brigade Water Supply Officer. He writes: The Brigade moved off from In Seirat on the morning of the first day (early), leaving behind all horse and camel transport, Q.M.'s and transport officers, together with the Staff Captain (Captain F. G. Bright, M.C.). As far as we had knowledge, no rendezvous for rations and supplies had been arranged prior to the Brigade's move, so during the day Captain Bright made a detour and chose the most suitable from which quartermaster sergeants could draw rations. This was fixed at a spot immediately behind Mansura Ridge. During his absence water had been drawn from the lagoon at Balah and all horses and camels watered. This watering of the 53rd and 54th Divisions practically drained the lagoon in one day.¹ All fantasia had been filled either from this lagoon or from the wells at Khan Yunis (the latter the previous day).² On the return of the Staff Captain preparations were at once made for regimental camels to proceed as Brigade convoy to the refilling point behind Mansura Ridge. The starting time was first fixed at 5 p.m., but delays for varying reasons made the time of departure nearer 7 p.m. It was essential, owing to hostile aircraft searching for convoys and the fact that part of the route was under observation from Gaza and Outpost Hill, we should move under cover of darkness. The convoy finally moved off from In Seirat at dusk and progress was slow owing to the difficulty of persuading camels to descend the steep slopes of wadis and ascend the other side without depositing their entire load. In some places it became necessary to shovel out an incline in order to get the camels to go across the wadis at all. Captain Bright and myself were mostly some hundreds of yards ahead of the convoy searching for suitable crossings with the aid of a torch. During the many crossings at varying points we, from some unaccountable reason (not very surprising and not due to bad leadership, but rather to the above-mentioned difficulties), missed the main track and after proceeding along a side track found ourselves at a dead end, with a 20 feet or more drop to the bed of a wadi (probably Wadi Ghazze). Finding this impassable for camels and not being able to locate the correct track, Bright and I left the convoy resting and proceeded to reconnoitre our position in the hope that we might hit the right track. We struck off on a compass bearing approximately to Mansura Ridge and, with the help of the stars, managed to progress fairly well for some little time. We had the utmost difficulty in controlling

1. R.E., assisted by men of the water convoy, bored new wells at Balah within a few hours of the state of the lagoon being reported.

2. Complaint was made in the 54th Division that the inadequate arrangements at Khan Yunis caused several of the units to have incomplete supplies.

our horses, as there were many cracks, holes and wadis to be circumnavigated. After some two hours' wanderings in utter darkness and when things looked nearly hopeless, we saw a light on our right in the far distance and at once made for it, not knowing whom we should encounter. The light was the only one to be seen and belonged to an advanced dressing station of the Australian Light Horse. They were good to us and lent us maps, gave us refreshments (much needed) and watered our horses. They were situated in a cactus garden (what map reference I do not know). Bright's horse, soon after our resumption, developed colic and this meant our walking quite a bit. We then tried to find our way back to the convoy and more by luck than good judgment we hit upon it where we had left it and not a great way from the track we should have followed. We then proceeded to our rendezvous, arriving just before dawn. At dawn the second day's attack commenced from Mansura Ridge. The camels were unloaded and taken back for further supplies of ammunition, etc. Acting under instructions, I returned to Mansura to guide a camel convoy of wounded to In Seirat. Major Turtle, of the 1/3rd Field Ambulance, R.A.M.C., who, by the way, was working all day like one possessed, had his first consignment ready by 3 p.m. There were about 120 camels, 60 native drivers, one A.S.C. sergeant and myself. The camels carried two men, one on each side. There were chair arrangements for sitting cases or cacalets for the more seriously wounded and lying cases. These cacalets are the most unsuitable method of carrying badly wounded men it is possible to conceive. An ordinary stretcher is placed in them, but the slightest lurch of the camel, either when he is getting up, on the move, or getting down, causes the broken bar underneath the stretcher to give way and thus the weight of the man in the stretcher causes the sides to press against him and if a man is badly injured the pressure increases his suffering. Consequently, such conditions are not conducive to recovery. Every few minutes the A.S.C. sergeant and I were compelled to stop the convoy and adjust one or more of these wretched stretchers. Added to these troubles we were spotted by an enemy aeroplane, which reported us, and we were shelled heavily, luckily without damage, as at the first sign we lay 'doggo' in a wadi. The shellfire, however, upset the morale of the natives and I had the utmost difficulty in preventing them from running away and leaving their camels. By dint of a hide riding crop with an eight-feet leash and a nine tails at the end, coupled with a Webley revolver, I managed to retain them. Darkness fell when we were miles from our destination and I once again found myself lost, principally owing to the remarkable similarity of two hills and I took the wrong one as my guide. After hours of wandering, with many stoppages for adjustments and other reasons (persuading the native drivers as to who was in charge—rather painful for them, I fear—my temper not being of the best at this stage of the proceedings),

we came across the 54th Division Casualty Clearing Station on the track to Belah. They were unfortunately full up with urgent cases and could do nothing much for me, so I proceeded by myself in further search of the 1/3rd F.A. After protracted wanderings I struck the 52nd Lowland Division, R.A.M.C., and determined to do something rather than keep these poor wounded fellows in agony any longer. I requested an interview with the C.O. (time approximately 10.30 p.m., 7½ hours from Mansura), I told him my position, number of cases, that I was lost and asked for information as to whereabouts of 1/3rd F.A. In less than five minutes he had his whole unit on the go at top speed. Lying cases were placed in comfortable positions and all were given tea, bread and jam and cigarettes. After a brief spell, during which time the C.O. told me that he would look after all the lying cases until the morning, I departed on the final stage of my search. I found the 1/3rd East Anglian F.A., R.A.M.C., at In Seirat, as I expected to do. An explanation of my losing my way may be gathered from the fact that I had only once before seen the tracks or landscape in daylight and that the same day. Several of the hills, which are the only means of identification, are as alike as two peas. Many members of the 161st Brigade will remember their voyage on the ships of the desert on March 26th, 1917. I am often spoken to about it now when I meet fellow travellers."

"The most vivid impression of the days immediately succeeding Gaza," observed an officer, "was the extraordinary cheerfulness, enthusiasm and industry of all ranks. This might seem to indicate hardheartedness and lack of thought for those who had fallen. That there was maintained a touching regard for the memory of those who had died was evident at the celebration of Holy Communion, which was held at the end of March. There was hardly a person present who did not show visible emotion. In general, however, for sixteen hours a day all ranks worked to re-equip and reorganize for the next battle, which we knew to be imminent. There had to be a certain amount of re-shuffling of officers, which was rapidly arranged, and it was also ordered that four officers and a proportion of other ranks should be left behind as a nucleus before the next attack."

4th The official record of the 1/4th Essex is brief, merely stating that the Battalion went into action on March 26th near Gaza. Their losses were severe, particularly among the senior officers, for the commanding officer was killed, the second-in-command (Major B. C. Wells) was wounded, a company commander (Captain J. W. Bell) was killed and three others wounded (Captains H. J. M. Earle, L. F. Bittles and M. P. Leith). The nine officers who fell were: Lieut.-Colonel E. J. Jameson, D.S.O. (Leinster Regiment), who died of wounds next day, Captain J. W. Bell (1st Essex), Lieut. F. W. Gidley (1st Essex), 2nd Lieuts. W. M. Vincent (8th Suffolks), F. G. Sweet (3rd Essex), G. O. Richardson, A. D. Hay Smith, V. H. Butcher and B. A. Clapham. Twelve others

were wounded, so that practically all the officers who went into action were casualties. There also died 49 other ranks, whilst 322 were wounded and 74 were missing, several of whom were afterwards reported killed. The total casualties were 463. The Battalion was withdrawn from the firing line on March 27th, reporting three men missing and six wounded. The greatest discomfort of the retirement was thirst and one sergeant, when they got back, confesses he drank three quarts of water right off. Major G. G. Ewer, 1/7th Essex, temporarily assumed command, with Captain G. Jones, 1/7th Essex, as second-in-command. On March 28th the Battalion bivouacked at In Seirat. Whilst there a Turkish aeroplane came over the lines and dropped a list of some of the prisoners they had taken.

5th The story in the War Diary of the 1/5th Essex is a little fuller, but still lacking in detail. It states: March 26th.—Battalion proceeded to Sheikh Nebhan as part of general reserve. At 9 a.m. moved nearer the enemy position. At 4 p.m. moved with 4th Essex to the attack of the southern part of Gaza defences in support of 160th Brigade (between Green Hill and Brown Hill). Battalion suffered heavy casualties and at midnight retired by order of Brigade. March 27th.—At 1 p.m. the Battalion advanced towards Gaza and dug in on a line running roughly east and west, about 800 yards from enemy position. At 10 p.m. retired by order of Brigade to In Seirat. At that place up to March 30th the Battalion was resting and re-equipping. The losses in the 1/5th Essex were almost as severe as those of the 1/4th Essex. The commanding officer (Lieut.-Colonel T. Gibbons) was wounded, the second-in-command (Major J. M. Heron) was killed and the adjutant (Lieut. T. H. Capron, 1st Essex) also fell, whilst three of the four company commanders (Captains F. W. Bacon, T. G. N. Franklin and E. H. D. Willmott) were wounded. Nine officers were killed (Major Heron, Captain C. A. Gould, Lieut. Capron, Lieuts. H. Maxwell Brown, 1st Essex, H. K. Chester, F. J. Bartley, C. V. Edmunds, C. O. Wilson and G. C. Beard), and nine were wounded. Of other ranks, 56 were killed, 220 were wounded, five were reported wounded and missing, six as prisoners of war, whilst 36 were missing, a total of 341 of all ranks. By means of Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons' graphic narrative and additional particulars supplied to the former's book by Major Wilson, the story is available in detail. By 10 a.m. on March 26th the Battalion had reached the south side of El Burjabye Ridge, where shrapnel from enemy artillery caused diligent use to be made of cover. Preparations were in progress for making tea for breakfast when the Battalion moved forward again, this time following the sandy bed of the Nukhabir, until Mansura Ridge was seen a thousand yards away—"the ridge is really the edge of a level plateau about 4,000 yards wide, which ran right up to the main enemy position." By platoons the Battalion still advanced, the first casualties being suffered by "A" Company, which included Captain E. H. D. Willmott



MAJOR HERON, 5th Essex.



MAJOR E. W. WILSON, D.S.O., 1/5th Essex.



*First Battle of Gaza : 16th ESSEX MEDALISTS.
Middle Row (left to right): 2. Capt. Shaldon, 3. Lieut.-Col. Ever, 4. Lieut. Mansfield.*

(wounded), Lieut. H. K. Chester (mortally wounded) and C.S.M. White (wounded); in addition to which several Lewis gun mules were killed, so that the guns and ammunition had to be carried by hand. The damage was done by shrapnel, the enemy's guns being directed at a British battery by a Taube flying overhead. The Essex gunners behind the ridge were busy replying to the enemy fire, but the range was considerable and visibility poor. The headquarters of the 53rd Division were on the edge of the plateau a hundred yards ahead of the artillery, and the Brigade lay down just behind the guns. About 4 p.m. information was received that the Brigade were to be put in to make the final effort, which it was thought would have sufficient weight to capture the main enemy position. The 1/4th and 1/5th Essex were to lead the attack, the former on the right, with 1/6th Essex in support and 1/7th Essex in reserve. The objective was estimated to be 4,000 yards distant. "The exact position of the enemy was unknown and no trenches were visible; they probably ran along the low ground at the foot of the slopes. The ground appeared to be perfectly level and open. It was covered as far as could be seen with coarse, thin grass. The attack was to be pushed home at the quickest possible pace and the Turks turned out. This was exactly like the 'attack' we had practised so many times on Mousehold Heath at Norwich and the 'breaks' at Drayton." "C" and "D" Companies (Colvin and Wilson) formed the first three lines, distributed in depth, with "A" and "B" (Gould and Bacon) and Battalion headquarters constituting the fourth. The companies started in lines of platoons in fours, with Lewis guns and ammunition mules with the platoons. When within long rifle range the mules were off loaded and moved to sheltered ground, the gun teams still moving with the platoons, which had split into sections in file. Then, when effective range had been reached, the leading sections extended along the whole front, the men at three paces interval, followed by the remainder as they reached the danger zone. "It was an absolute drill book attack, and it went like clockwork. Direction, line and intervals were perfectly kept." Presently the long lines of men, pressing forward with the utmost steadiness, met crossed machine gun-fire and fell rapidly, but there was no faltering; they went on. At this stage Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons was wounded by a bullet in his thigh, and could only lie and wait for news thereafter of the gallant behaviour of his Battalion. He noted, however, the steady advance of the 1/6th Essex in support. When news arrived from the wounded, it was that Major Heron had fallen, "the most loyal and unselfish second-in-command that any C.O. ever had"; that Lieut. Capron, "keenest and helpfulest of adjutants," had been killed within twenty yards of the position, shot through the heart, and that Lieut. Maxwell Browne, his friend, knowing himself to be mortally wounded, had bidden the stretcher bearers to take those whom there was a chance of saving and "he died

alone in his glory, out there under the stars." Others fell, too, Sergeants H. E. Kemble, H. Halls, Mann, Jeayes, Corporals Rainbird, P. R. Humphries, H. Stock, J. Murray, F. Hart and Lance-Corporal F. J. Rolph. It was a heavy toll, but there came the comforting intelligence at night to the wounded commander that the Battalion had established itself in the key position. What had happened was that "A" and "C" Companies had taken the Green Hill position with the bayonet, many Turks falling in its defence. Its capture was a notable feat of arms, for in addition to the wire entanglements, the Turks had dug pits, 4ft. deep by 6ft. wide, and filled them with barbed wire. "B" and "D" Companies also established themselves to the left at Brown Hill, later known as the Labyrinth. Captain Finn penetrated as far as a stone hut, midway between the Green Hill and the Labyrinth, the leader and his batman being the only unwounded men of the platoon. The Royal Sussex, 53rd Division, were found in occupation of an exposed position in the Labyrinth, having suffered heavily, and when at dusk the latter were withdrawn, the Essex companies took over their line. The Turkish counter bombardment by 5.9 guns was just too long in range, its worst effect being the destruction of signal wires to Battalion and Brigade headquarters. One shell brought down a mass of earth which almost buried "D" Company signallers. Had the range been exact, there would have been heavy losses, as the men, until they relieved the Royal Sussex, were crowded together in a deep wadi. Touch was obtained by Corporal A. E. Ruffle, who gallantly passed through intense Turkish counter fire. At midnight a conference was held on Green Hill of the Brigadier, Colonel Bowker (6th) and Major Wilson (5th). Orders had been received to withdraw. Particular attention was to be given to the wounded, who were to be taken back with the troops. The Sussex had suffered severely and Captain Deakin (5th Essex) was of considerable assistance in evacuating their casualties. Stretchers were so scarce that most of the wounded had to be carried in waterproof sheets. Daylight had come before the outpost line of the 1/7th was entered at Mansura. At 6 a.m. on March 27th Major Wilson was informed that the position which had been captured would be reoccupied and at 9 a.m. orders were received by which the 5th took up a line westward from Mansura Ridge, the 4th being on their right. The Battalion strength had been reduced to 250 and it was reorganized into three companies. Later in the day (5 p.m.), the left flank being in the air, the Lewis guns were ordered up to that point. Suddenly, between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m., enemy fire came from this flank for ten minutes and then about 200 khaki-clad Turks, aided by the difficulty in identification, advanced within hailing distance, calling out "Essex, Essex." There was a possibility that they were men of the Brigade, but doubts were set at rest by one of the Turks shouting "Royal Essex!" and with that the 1/5th opened fire and stretched half of them on the ground. The



LIEUT.-COL. T. GIBBONS, D.S.O.



SURVIVORS AFTER MARCH 26th, 1917.

Front Row (from left to right): Capt. C. S. Wink (M.O.), 2nd Lieut. J. F. Finn, Capt. F. B. Doakins, Major W. E. Wilson, Lieut. A. Colvin, Lieut. B. J. Moon-Hughes, Lieut. L. H. Gray.
Middle Row (from left to right): Lieut. C. Portway, 2nd Lieut. R. J. S. Bateman, Capt. B. K. Bond, C.F., Lieut. J. L. French, Lieut. H. Miller, Lieut. A. E. Kinnerley.

reserve, upon hearing the firing, were brought up to counter attack, but by the time the front line was reached the fight was over. Orders to withdraw were received and at midnight the toilsome march was started to In Seirat, in the course of which touch was temporarily lost with the Brigade due to the company of another Battalion crossing the front of the 1/5th. The Wadi Ghazze proved a haven of refuge and there the Battalion waited until daylight came and it was found that Sheikh Nebhan was close at hand. Many gallant deeds are recorded of those days of desperate fighting. Of the senior officers, Wilson is described by Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons as having "displayed rare powers of leadership," Captain Colvin as possessing "splendid dash and resolution in attack," and Captain Deakin as showing "complete disregard of danger, together with leadership and resource." Lieut. Calverley, although wounded, remained with the Lewis guns until the position was taken and then, after consolidation, attended to the wounded, whom he protected from Bedouins, three of the latter being taken prisoners. Lieut. French was skilful in reconnaissance and on the 27th was responsible for detecting and defeating the Turkish counter attack. Lieut. Womersley maintained the signal communications in spite of two wounds. Private William Fell went forward alone on the flank and located the enemy machine gun, thus enabling the Lewis guns to engage it and the company to resume the advance. In this exploit he was mortally wounded. Private Tom Davidson, when machine gun-fire from a hut held up his platoon, directed the fire of his section upon the loophole and thus covered the advance, being severely wounded whilst so doing. Sergeant H. W. Rand, on March 27th, safely covered the withdrawal of machine guns and then was captured by the Turks. Two of them he bayoneted, but he was knocked unconscious by a third. When he recovered in the dark he was able to make his escape and had, moreover, the good fortune to recover his notebook when on patrol three months later. Private Oscar Rand safely brought up ammunition for the Lewis guns by tying one of his puttees to the canvas carriers and pulling them along the ground. The gun was knocked out, but he recovered it after dark. Lance-Corporal Bert Fenner fought his Lewis gun until he collapsed with loss of blood from three wounds in the arm. Private Edward Jemson succoured many wounded under heavy fire and Corporal N. C. Cunningham, of the Signal Section, laid a fresh line to Brigade headquarters and established a Battalion office, notwithstanding continuous fire. Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons adds: "The above are only a few instances brought to notice by superiors of the gallantry and resource shown by all ranks in this battle. A far greater number will never be recorded."

6th The fullest account of the battle preserved in the War Diaries is that of the 6th Essex. The Battalion entered Palestine in the early morning of March 25th, leaving the sand and marching over ground which bore resemblance to half-grown cornfields. Several

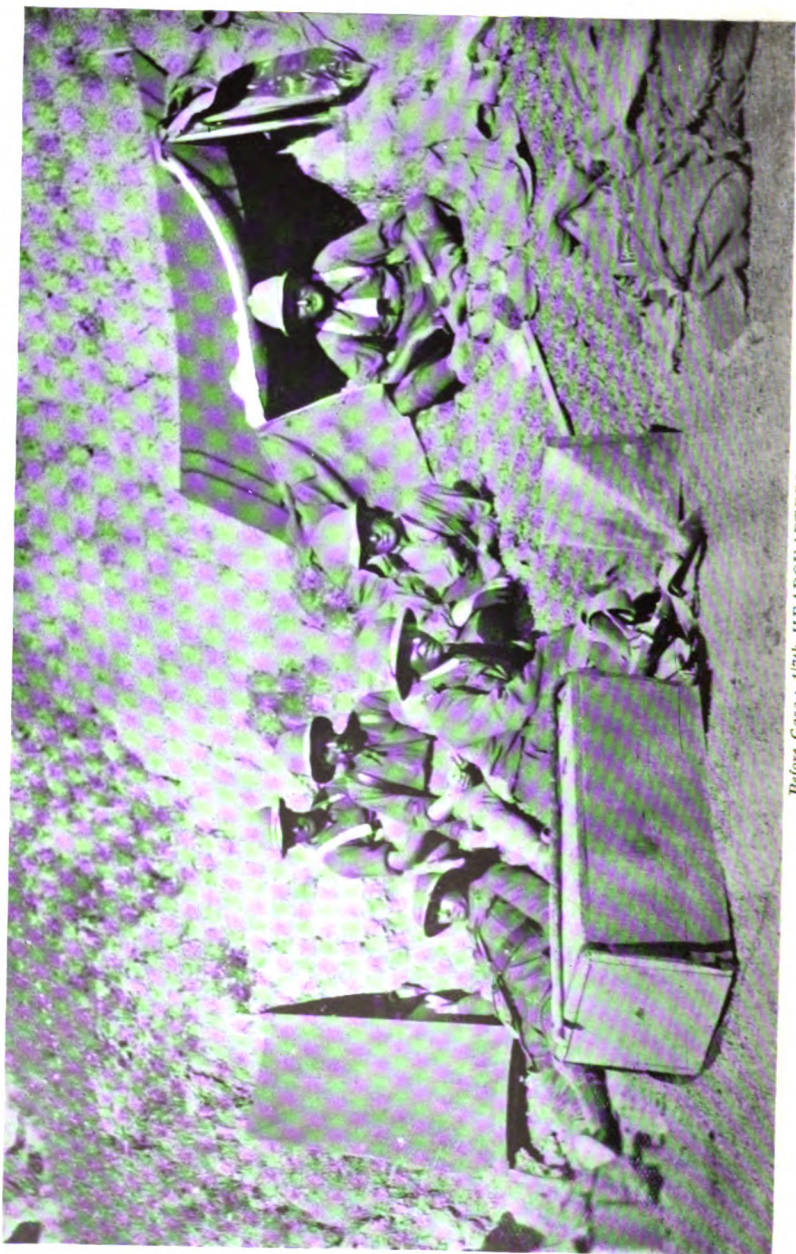
columns moved parallel to the Battalion. A halt was called in a field just beyond Beni Sela for dinner, the men being concealed from aeroplane observation by sheltering under cactus hedges and palm trees. Moving off again at 4 p.m., In Scirat was reached four hours later. Next morning the Battalion left in the misty dawn for the tomb of Sheikh Nebhan, where in a wadi they cooked their meal and did their best to conceal themselves from a hostile aeroplane, having been under aerial observation almost daily since the column left El Arish. The track of five widths of rabbit wire had proved a great alleviation of fatigue upon the desert march and permitted of almost rapid movement. The men's heel tips came off in great numbers in the wire and Colonel Bowker personally collected as many as he could to save the wear of the mesh, his opinion being that it would have aided the march if the men had been ordered to pick them up as they went along. The mules and baggage camels were organized in two separate columns, moving alongside the wire, and it was found desirable that they should march without distance and well closed up, disregarding for the time being the particular units to which they were attached. Halts of fifteen minutes every hour were made. As, perhaps, the curious investigator a century hence may be interested in knowing what the men carried in their valises, here is the list: Waistcoat-cardigan, cap-comforter, hold-all (which contained laces, toothbrush, razor and case, shaving brush, comb), S.D. trousers, housewife, mess tin, waterproof sheet and two sandbags. All ranks had stood the march well, only one man falling out since they started from the Canal. At 9.40 a.m., as the heat of the day grew more intense, the Battalion moved up closer to the firing line and then halted at Es Sire, being secreted in dongas near a wireless installation, for aeroplanes were active. Here the first shrapnel was encountered, which bespattered "A" Company with dust. Marching in the rear of the of the 1/5th Essex, the Battalion reached Mansura without loss. There, later, the commanders conferred with the Brigadiers and received orders to attack due north, "the point of direction being termed a post, which proved to be a small aloe-like tree on the skyline on a long green hill which lies between Ali el Muntar and a bare sandhill called by the men the 'Rabbit Warren' and by the Brigadier, 'the Labyrinth.' The whole of this front was entrenched." The 1/6th Essex were in support to the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex, moving 1,500 yards in the rear of the former. The dressing station was 1,000 yards forward of the starting point, which was some 3,750 yards distant from the objective. Two sections of the 161st Machine Gun Company accompanied the Battalion. At 4.30 p.m. the 1/6th Essex went forward, "B," "C," "D" and "A" Companies in the order given and in rear of one another. Each Company retained its Lewis guns, whilst Battalion headquarters were in front of "D" Company and the second-in-command in rear of "A" Company. The Brigadier had established his

headquarters 1,200 yards from the starting point and here "D" and "A" Companies halted for some time. Major Alexander and other headquarters officers followed the two leading companies ("B" and "C"). After a while "D" Company was ordered up, the Battalion commander and adjutant having been instructed to force the capture of the position and to consolidate it when won. "A" Company (Captain Tee) was retained in Brigade reserve. During the advance Major Alexander was killed by machine gun-fire, others also being hit. The Turkish machine guns covered cleverly designed defences and were skilfully sited. "B" Company (Captain Sheldon) lost eight sergeants in reinforcing the firing line. "The only impression I have got," wrote Captain O'Hara Smith, "is going towards Green Hill by platoon rushes. The bullets seemed like rain. I, myself, was hit twice through the pack and once through the field glasses before I was finally wounded. Whether or not my rush forward made any impression on the Turk I know not, because until I was hit I never saw one." At nightfall the dispositions were: Cheshire Regiment (Colonel Lawrence) at Ali el Muntar: party of the 1/5th Royal Welsh Fusiliers in a trench between the former point and Green Hill. Then "C" and "B" Companies, 6th Essex, on the left, and in succession half of "D" Company, then 60 men of the 4th Essex and about 50 others. Two platoons of "D" Company (Lieut. Hyrons) were in a forward position on a ridge which appeared, in the darkness, to dominate the adjacent country. There was a general reserve behind the Turkish wire of 200-500 rifles of various battalions, whilst another party of the 1/5th Essex (Major Wilson) was to the left of them. Consolidation was well advanced—observation parties and patrols pushed slightly forward and sentries posted—when it was learnt that the troops were to be withdrawn. The three companies of the 1/6th Essex were rearguard and were the last to quit the hill at 2.25 a.m. on March 27th. They marched in extended order and picked up wounded men and arms, also leaving a party of volunteers to assist at a dressing station established just within the outpost line of the 1/7th Essex. At 5.15 a.m. the Battalion was once again at its starting point, tired and hungry. There had been no opportunity of serving a cooked meal. Lieut.-Colonel Bowker thus commented on the day's fighting: "Possibly the majority of the casualties suffered by the Essex battalions were due to machine gun-fire. The consensus of opinion in the Battalion is that the enemy's machine guns near the Mosque (Ali el Muntar) were silenced by our artillery and of those on the west, one by the 161st Machine Gun Company and two by the Lewis guns of the Battalion. The four telescopic rifles of the Battalion and its Lewis guns sought out the enemy automatic guns." At 7 a.m. on March 27th some of the men had just filled water bottles, cleaned their rifles, completed reorganization and were awaiting tea, when orders came to move at once in support of the 7th Essex, who had advanced to reoccupy the position

evacuated during the night. "A" Company, followed by "B" Company, was directed on Ali el Muntar, and "D" and "C" Companies to the Green Hill on the west, Lewis guns being with the Companies. Each column also had a sub-section of 161st Machine Gun Company. Battalion headquarters followed "D" Company, and "C" Company, in reserve, were echeloned to the west flank. Green Hill was reoccupied and both the 1/6th and 1/7th held the forward slopes on the north of Ali el Muntar. The two battalions had a wide frontage, including the whole of Ali el Muntar and part of the Labyrinth, which was honeycombed with trenches, apparently the result of prolonged labour. At 9.15 a.m. 2nd Lieut. Hall (7th Essex) reported an enemy advance in strength from the south-east and almost immediately they launched an attack on the northern and north-western slopes of Ali el Muntar, supported by artillery and machine gun fire, whilst Turks also reappeared to the north of Green Hill. To avoid being cut off, the advanced troops fell back by stages to the Turkish works facing south, which were unoccupied, and the enemy attack was thus foiled. Private Swift's gallantry as a messenger was noted. A Lewis gun, in a little salient trench north-east of Ali el Muntar, caused the Turks considerable annoyance. The attack thereabouts was pressed closely on three sides and the enemy were within thirty yards of the parapet when the last parties left, having first damaged artillery instruments and a machine gun. In the withdrawal to In Seirat at 11.30 that night the Battalion was rearguard, lying extended whilst other corps passed through. Connection was lost with the centre of the column because some man of another battalion led a mule through and touch could not be recovered. At 5 a.m. on March 28th the weary Battalion bivouacked in a donga, well screened from the dawn wind, and put out four outpost groups. At 9 a.m. the Battalion reported at Brigade headquarters. Lieut. Colonel Bowker's concluding observations were: "The Battalion on both days moved to the attack well and its officers set their men to work with vigour in entrenching and consolidating the first position captured. The men behaved very staunchly and well." The casualties were heavy. Of 27 combatant officers, 18 were killed or wounded. The seven killed were: Major H. P. Alexander, Captain E. W. Tee, Captain L. B. Rayner, Captain H. F. Silverwood, Lieut. H. P. Taverner, Lieut. H. W. Clubb and 2nd Lieut. H. S. Phillips. The casualties were heavy among the senior officers. On March 26th two officers and eleven other ranks were killed; six officers and 96 other ranks were wounded; eight other ranks were reported wounded and missing and three were missing, 126 in all. On March 27th five officers were killed (Captains Silverwood, Tee and Rayner and Lieuts. Taverner and Clubb), with twelve other ranks, five officers were wounded, with 114 other ranks, whilst 36 other ranks were stated to be wounded and missing and 47 other ranks missing, losses mainly incurred when the Battalion disengaged



REV. B. K. BOND and LIEUT. BATEMAN.



Before Gaea : 17th HEADQUARTERS.

from the encircling forces of the enemy. This day's casualties were, therefore, 219—a total for the two days of 345.

7th The record of the 1/7th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel Delamare) for March 26th simply runs: "Battalion in support to 53rd Division in attack on Gaza," and that for March 27th, "Battalion in attack on Gaza." The total casualties for that day were 228. Four officers were killed (Captain Guy Hetherington, 2nd Lieuts. W. G. O. Gill, R. E. Gould and W. T. Lewis) and five wounded, whilst 22 other ranks were killed, 128 wounded and 68 missing, again caused when, with the 1/6th, the Battalion rejoined the Brigade. The following narrative of events has been compiled by Captain J. Schofield, M.C., Captain J. R. Eve and Lieut. J. W. Ellis, who were present on March 26th and 27th: On Sunday, March 25th, reveille was at 2 a.m., the Battalion moving off at 4.15 for Beni Sela. All ranks rested there during the hot part of the day under palm trees and cactus hedges, with strict orders to conceal themselves from aircraft observation. The last fresh meat meal for some time was cooked under extreme difficulties, supplemented by Jaffa oranges purchased from native hawkers of doubtful allegiance at the rate of two for one shilling. The Battalion moved off at 4 p.m. for In Seirat, where it arrived about 9 p.m. Rations consisting of a half-issue of bully, biscuits, raisins and one pint of water only were distributed almost immediately, and these were the last issued until about 5 o'clock on the 27th. Some hours' sleep was obtained, without blankets, preparatory to a move before a foggy dawn on the 26th to Sheikh Nebhan. An attempt to breakfast was frustrated by the arrival of fresh orders. The Brigade was to go immediately into close support of the 53rd Division in an attack on Gaza. The move was made in the following order of Battalions: 7th, 6th, 5th and 4th. It was a day of continual moves in a broiling hot sun—from In Seirat to Sheikh Nebhan; from Sheikh Nebhan to El Burjabye, where the Brigade turned about to execute a difficult approach march along the Wadi Nukabir to Mansura Ridge. On arrival there, about 4.30, the Battalion came into divisional reserve. No. 13 Platoon, "D" Company, were almost immediately ordered to take reserve ammunition to the forward troops, then heavily engaged. Towards dusk "A" Company (Captain E. Whur, M.C.), "B" Company (Captain R. A. Stubblings) and "C" Company (Captain G. Jones) were ordered to take up an outpost line about midway between Mansura and Ali el Muntar to cover the withdrawal of the forward troops, whilst "D" Company (Captain J. Schofield, M.C.) was ordered to proceed at dusk unarmed with all available waterproof sheets to collect the wounded. The great number of these, the darkness of the night and the uncertainty of the whereabouts of the forward troops, made the task far beyond the powers of one company. Just before dawn on the 27th the outposts were withdrawn—after patrols had been sent to the evacuated position—and the Battalion concentrated at Mansura. Orders were then issued

to re-occupy the position, the objectives being : " C " Company, Ali el Muntar ; " B " Company, The Warren ; " A " Company, Green Hill, and " D " Company, The Labyrinth. These positions were occupied under some moderate rifle and shrapnel fire from enemy troops who had returned to the positions. " D " Company cut off and captured several of the enemy endeavouring to escape from the Labyrinth to the Plantation. About 8.45 a large body of troops in open formation was observed advancing across the plain from the Beersheba Road. For a time there was doubt whether they were friend or foe. Heavy rifle fire quickly decided they were the latter and it was apparent that the position was precarious on account of this flanking movement. At this juncture orders were received to " Withdraw fighting westward." The withdrawal was continued by bounds throughout the day, until the remnants of the Battalion concentrated about 4 o'clock. There water and food were obtained, the first issue since that on the evening of the 25th. The Battalion was held in readiness for further action, if necessary, until orders were received to move at 10 o'clock p.m. for In Seirat. The roll call prior to departure totalled 185 all ranks. This figure was augmented during the next day or two by stragglers returning from other units.

M.G. The officers of the 161st Machine Gun Company at the battle were : In command, Major J. A. Walker ; second-in-command, Captain W. H. Brooks ; No. 1 Section, Lieut. J. N. Coker and 2nd Lieut. J. C. Daniels ; No. 2, Lieut. R. H. S. Coleman and Lieut. A. V. Coates ; No. 3, Lieut. R. D. F. Wall and Lieut. Carter ; No. 4, Lieut. A. H. F. Harwood and Lieut. C. Needell. When the attack was launched on the first day from Mansura Ridge, No. 2 Section supported the 4th Essex on the right flank and No. 4 Section was similarly employed with the 5th Essex. Nos. 1 and 3 Sections gave covering fire, having moved forward in rear of the attacking battalions. The right sub-section of No. 1 Section (Coker) went a little to the right flank and from the vicinity of En Namus fired at extreme range on Ali el Muntar and then, when it was certain that the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex had entered the trenches, " lifted " the guns so as to endeavour to catch the Turks in retreat. The other sub-section (Daniels) was a little to the left of its companion sub-section and afforded similar support. After dark No. 1 Section fell back towards Mansura, when it was sent out to pick up No. 2 Section's spare kit, which had been jettisoned near some old trenches between Beersheba Road and the Lower Road. This mission was safely effected and the Section returned just before dawn. It was not to rest, however, because it was ordered almost immediately to advance with the 6th Essex to the support of the 7th Essex. The machine gunners marched with " A " Company of the 6th, the right sub-section continuing straight to Ali el Muntar and Daniels' sub-section to Green Hill. The former got beyond the tomb on Ali el Muntar and mounted their

guns, but the targets were few and the enemy soon vanished. When Turkish pressure from Beersheba caused a withdrawal, this sub-section went by the sunken path of the Warren and along Green Hill in a south-westerly direction, being fired upon by enemy machine guns from a point north-east of the tomb. When Colonel Bowker's improvised line was reached Lieut. Daniels' sub-section was found on the rearmost ridge and the rest of the Section, now reunited, mounted some guns, but found no targets, for an extraordinarily well-directed shrapnel fire caused a further retirement. At night the Machine Gun headquarters, with Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Sections, withdrew to In Scirat.

No. 4 Section was with the 5th Essex and Lieut. Harwood decided that the only chance of affording suitable covering fire for the advance upon Green Hill was to move well out on to the left flank, which seemed to be quite empty of troops. As the 5th Essex were opening into artillery formation, No. 4 Section marched to the left and after going between 2,000 and 2,500 yards endeavoured to find positions from which to give covering fire. Behind a slight fold in the ground the mules were unloaded, in order to save their loss, and the guns were manhandled forward to the vicinity of Middlesex Hill, to which point the mules were subsequently brought by Sergeant Sayer by way of a wadi. The infantry attack had progressed so rapidly, however, and the ground was so flat that no effective fire could be given until Green Hill had been taken, when the Section moved forward to assist in consolidation. Some of the 53rd Division had been found in the Labyrinth by a reconnoitring patrol. Whilst this was being done Lieut. Needell went back in the darkness to Machine Gun Company headquarters to report the situation and found Major Walker with the Brigadier. It was then that orders were received to withdraw. No. 4 Section was lucky enough to pass through the day without a casualty. At Mansura Ridge the Section endeavoured to get a little rest, but was soon awakened to form a defensive line in front of the Ridge to support the 6th and 7th Essex, who had moved forward to reoccupy Green Hill and Ali el Muntar. There the hours lowly passed, the officers and men suffering much from scarcity of water and rations. A small muddy pond was found and, regardless of orders to the contrary, the water was drunk with the greatest relish. The Turkish counter-attack on the left was beaten off by the 5th Essex and then, about midnight, the Section withdrew quite tired out in rear of the column. "I happened to be at the tail end," wrote an officer, "and every time the column halted, which was fairly frequently, the men sat down and at once went to sleep. I dare not sit down myself, as I should have done the same and a large number of us would have been left behind. As it was, I had, as soon as the column moved on again, to literally kick the fellows to wake them up. One gun team did a magnificent feat that night. They had lost their gun mules, but they refused to abandon the gun and tripod, so they carried the gun—it was a Maxim and

weighed over 70lb., and the tripod about 50lb—all the way back to In Seirat, even though they were quite done up themselves. I think, as a feat of endurance and as an example of determination, that wants some beating. When the Section arrived eventually at the Wadi Ghazze they lay down and slept until dawn, in company with the 6th Essex, when they continued their march to In Seirat, where they found the remainder of the Company, under Captain Brooks, waiting for them.”¹

HOW THE PRISONERS FARED.

There were over one hundred men taken prisoner when the 1/6th and 1/7th withdrew on March 27th, to rejoin the Brigade, and their subsequent adventures are related by Sergeant T. G. Bates, who was captured on the hill of Ali el Muntar. A great proportion of them never saw their homes again, for they died of disease. His story runs: My little party comprised forty, of whom only five got away. I was marched off with another man, who subsequently died in the hands of the Turk. We were taken to Tellesh Sheria and there met about ninety more prisoners of different regiments, including about ten of my own. On Good Friday we left for Jerusalem by train; there we stopped one day, again entrained and came to Damascus. At that city we were kept two days in barracks and during that time twenty men went into hospital. When we left there we received two loaves of bread, weighing about $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. each, and a handful of olives; this was each man's rations for two days. From Damascus we went to Aleppo. We reached there about 6 o'clock in the evening and left again next morning. Two days later we arrived at Baghche and there met Captain Caine, R.A.M.C., captured at Kut el Imara. We were put into a camp on the hillside for six days; then we were inspected and all except one man went to work on the railway lines. The excepted man died from typhoid fever a few days later. Tradesmen were asked for and I, with 27 others, went to work in Baghche tunnel, the remainder of the party being employed on the embankments. Our work in that tunnel was running truckloads of stone into it and pushing the empties back again. We now got a $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. loaf each day and at 2 and 6 o'clock had a meal of lentil soup. As near as I can say, the tunnel was finished in the middle of June, 1917, and as soon as this was done we had to carry on the work of laying a broad gauge line. By this time, the heat being terrible and the work so hard, the men were getting in a very weak state. Before the end of another fortnight the whole party, including myself, were in hospital with malaria or dysentery. This state of things lasted all through July and the beginning of August. Some men got better and were sent to work again, but soon returned to hospital with relapses of fever. On August 12th a party of 52

1. Considerable effort has been made to obtain a complete story of the work of all sections of the M.G. Company. Some officers have been most helpful, but it is regretted that constant application in other quarters has met with no response.

were picked out and sent to Bore, a new camp. By this time the party working on the embankment was increased to about 120 by the arrival of other prisoners, but we were all in a chronic state of sickness. I was picked out for a Bore party and left Bagheche on August 27th, and I reached the new place on September 1st. Another bout of fever laid me low, but after a month I began to pick up and feel myself again. This was mainly due to the fact that each month we received £4 from the Spanish Consul ; money paid into the Prisoners of War Fund in England. With this money we bought necessities that helped us out with the little bit of wheat we got from the Turks. In the course of the next two months the whole of the party captured with me, excepting some twenty, arrived at Bore ; the other twenty had 'gone west' at Bagheche. I stopped at Bore Camp until March 13th, 1918, and during my stay of about six months in all we lost about eighty men, who died in Nedja Hospital. Then a party of us who had been picked as fit and well were sent to work at Kelebek tunnel. On arriving there we found that within a radius of some four miles about 200 other British prisoners of war were working. Whilst we were at Bore there came through a batch of prisoners captured in the last Gaza stunt in November. Fresh prisoners provided our only chance of getting news from the outer world and from these we heard of the fall of Gaza at the third attempt and of the capture of Jerusalem. We continued to work on the tunnel at Kelebek until August 10th and by this time out of 120 men who at first worked at it, only fifteen could turn out owing to sickness. We were also in the bad books of a German engineer and this was no help. He was subsequently killed by an accident whilst interfering with the work of British prisoners on the railway. There came a new German engineer and he was so 'fed up' with our men being sick that he sent us to work amongst the Turkish military authorities at Adana. There we worked six hours per day, but received no pay at all and lived on the Turkish soldiers' ration. This consisted of a pound of very brown bread. We used to get two kilos of flour, with a little salt and about half a pint of olive oil, between fifty of us for breakfast—and our next meal would be at six in the evening ! At that time we also received about one kilo of meat (plus bone) between five men, with a small ration of tomatoes and egg plant (bringer) ; this was issued every day, but the meat only came our way every other day, so that six hours were quite enough to work. Our labour consisted of loading wood fuel on to railway engines or into trucks. From the engine drivers we got all the news of the advance of General Allenby's troops through Palestine and the capture of Damascus and Aleppo. It was obvious which way the fighting was going, as six trainloads of troops and war material went down to Aleppo every day and six trainloads of wounded men and of smashed-up war material used to arrive back ! Owing to the fall of Aleppo, our party was moved further inland, on about October 30th,

to a place called Jonzanti, and there we carried on woodcutting for about a week, until we heard the news from different Germans that an armistice was being signed by Turkey. Then we went on strike; we refused to work any more. We soon found that this information was correct and from that time we were treated with civility and respect by everyone. For three days we lived in the Turkish officers' barracks and were then sent to Bellimidik. Whilst there we were several times asked to work, but always refused. We were then even threatened with a stoppage of our rations, but this had no effect; we were determined to do no more work in Turkey. By December 10th a special train of 24 trucks arrived, filled with prisoners of war; these included English, Indians, Russians, Russian Armenians, Serbians and Italians. We joined it and eventually arrived at Mersina, near Adana. There we were put on board H.M.S. 'Huntspill' and sailed for Port Said, calling at Beirut on the way. We arrived on December 13th and were fitted up with all necessities, after which we sailed for 'Blighty.' We reached Taranto, went overland to Calais and landed at Dover on January 10th, 1919. From Dover we went to the dispersal station at Canterbury." "I can tell you," the sergeant added, "a funny story of Turkish stupidity. While we were at Adana we heard that our aeroplanes were expected to bomb the railway station and while on the 12 to 6 o'clock shift a Turkish gendarme took us back to barracks. Apparently a telegram had been received saying that aeroplanes had been sighted coming towards Adana and we were hurried to take cover. After waiting for two hours we 'kicked up a shindy' with the gendarme, as we wanted to get back to our barracks. While this 'shindy' was on we heard the drone of aeroplanes and saw three coming towards Adana. We at first supposed them to be English aeroplanes, but when they got nearer we saw the German crosses on them and were, of course, greatly disappointed. By this time all the workmen from the station and all the people from Adana town were running for the vineyards. The Turks did not know the German aeroplanes from their own or from any others and, therefore, began to let fly at them with their anti-aircraft guns. The machines were quite low, yet they never touched them. The first outburst was a signal for every other gun to fire, and a perfect tornado followed all round. We chaps could not help laughing at the Turks, who, however, persisted in firing. Some German soldiers close by were so enraged that they would have killed any Turk they could have got hold of and started chasing them about in all directions. After the aeroplanes had alighted we asked the Turks in charge of us what reason they had for firing, as the 'planes were their own. They were raw recruits who had never fired a rifle before. I may also mention a strange thing that happened at Bagheche. The Italian overseer took a dislike to one of my men for no reason whatever. One day, as we were running trucks into the tunnel, a blockage occurred and some of

the wagons came off the line. About eight men were lifting it on again when this Italian grasped hold of the man in question, shook him and told him to help. The man's English blood rose and he struck out with his fist, hit the Italian in the eye and knocked him down. The Italian sent straight away for the gendarme sergeant and was going to march the man away to the commandant. Of course, I interfered and wanted to know what the trouble was about. When the gendarme said he would take the man to the commandant, I said I should go as well, and to this he agreed. The rest of the men who had helped with the trucks followed to see fairplay and a dozen of us faced the commandant. We had to speak through a Turkish interpreter and so could not get a fair hearing. The case was decided against us and all the men, except myself, received five strokes with a stick on the feet, bastinado fashion. The reason given was that the men had left their work without permission and it was impressed on me and all the others that this was not 'punishment,' but just a little something to show that we must not leave work in that way!"

Note.—For the arrangements made by the Divisional R.A.M.C. for this Battle and the part they played therein see Appendix to this volume.

SECOND BATTLE OF GAZA.

The effort to capture Gaza was not relinquished, for the difficulties of the Russian Government made it essential that pressure should be maintained upon the Turks in Palestine and on March 30th, as already noted, Sir Archibald Murray received instructions to advance upon Jerusalem. The railhead reached Deir el Balah on April 5th and thus facilitated the transport of troops and supplies, whilst surf boats also landed considerable quantities of food and material upon the open beach from steamships. The Wadi Ghazze was intersected with roads and crossing places and was provided, too, with a tank water supply, which was obtained by rail from Deir el Balah over the In Seirat ridge. The 74th Division was also brought up, so that in addition to artillery, the two cavalry divisions and a brigade of camelry, there were four infantry divisions in hand, the 52nd, 53rd, 54th and 74th, although the second and third had been weakened by casualties in the battle of March 26th-27th. The second battle of Gaza was unlike that of the first in two respects. The important elements of movement and surprise were absent. The Turkish troops, enheartened by the check which they had administered, were in better spirit and their numbers had been considerably reinforced. It was estimated that the garrison of Gaza was not less than 8,500 rifles, out of a total of from 20,000 to 25,000 concentrated in the area, comprising the 3rd Cavalry Division, 16th, 27th, 53rd and 54th Turkish Divisions, with heavy artillery. The defences of the city had been improved and strengthened, and extended some 12,000 yards from the sea coast to Atawine. The enemy were upon the alert and well posted to meet any subsequent attack. Further, for sixteen miles towards Beersheba, through Hureira and Sheria, strong works had been constructed which closed the route by which the cavalry had previously executed an enveloping march. The water supply did not admit of riding farther afield. The range of operations was, therefore, more limited. The role of the cavalry was confined to safeguarding the right flank and delivering containing attacks, whilst the main assault was entrusted to infantry divisions, aided for the first time by tanks, and supported by naval fire. The operation was divided into two stages. The G.O.C. Eastern Force was ordered, with the 52nd and 54th Divisions, to occupy the line Sheikh Abbas—Mansura—Kurd Hill on the Es Sire ridge as the first phase. The 53rd Division, on the left, was to remain in position just north of the Wadi Ghazze between the sea and the Gaza-Khan Yunis road, and also to carry out strong reconnaissances northwards along the coast. The 74th Division was in general reserve near In Seirat. One cavalry division was disposed about



Second Battle of Gaza : At Sheikh Abbas Ridge.

Shellal with the object of immobilizing enemy forces at Hureira, whilst the remainder of the Desert Column protected the right of the 54th Division. At dawn on April 17th the advance was made and by 7 a.m. the Mansura ridge was in our possession, practically without casualties. The only fighting occurred when a body of Turkish cavalry was dislodged by a brigade of the Anzac Mounted Division from a ridge just east of Wadi Imleih. At night the cavalry fell back to the Wadi Ghazze, leaving an outpost line on the right of the 54th Division southwards. Throughout the day and far into the night, consolidation of the Mansura position went on under intermittent shell-fire.

The 54th Division had been given as its immediate objective for the first phase the Sheik Abbas—Mansura ridge from Meshrefe to the point where the Gaza—Mendur road cuts the crest, which was the point of junction with the 52nd Division, who had to seize the remainder of the ridge as far as Kurd Hill. At 7.15 p.m. on April 16th the division commenced to move over the Wadi Ghazze, first posting a screen of outposts supplied by the Herts Yeomanry and the 162nd and 163rd Brigades. The artillery followed and took up positions to the west and south-west of Sharta, being succeeded by the 161st Brigade, which moved into reserve at Wadi Sharta. The whole of the units were at their points of concentration by 4.15 on the morning of April 17th. Promptly at 4.30, supported by one section of tanks, the 163rd Brigade seized Hill 300 without opposition, so as to clear the way for the general attack on Sheikh Abbas. At 4.45 a.m. the general advance on the ridge began. The 163rd Brigade, on the right, was on the crest by 6.45 a.m., the two leading battalions having only two casualties and those caused by snipers. The tanks found difficulty in keeping direction owing to the uncertain light and the broken ground. One of them received a direct hit, which stopped it about 200 yards from the crest, followed by two more almost immediately afterwards, which set it on fire. The 162nd Brigade also met with very little opposition, the Turkish detachments posted on the ridge retiring quickly before the infantry. Promiscuous shell-fire was experienced whilst the Brigades were digging-in, but few casualties were suffered, because of the inferior ammunition used. When an attempt was made to move the right of the 162nd Brigade over the crest, however, it was quickly assailed by shrapnel. During the morning a portion of the 161st Brigade was employed in constructing a track to Kutshan and preparing ramps for artillery to move into the wadi west of Mendur. The Herts Yeomanry maintained touch with the Desert Column until nightfall. During the evening the 161st Brigade was moved into a portion of the line held by the 163rd Brigade to enable some of the battalions of the latter to rest. The whole day of April 18th was employed in strengthening the position and making preparations for the assault upon the Turkish main position. The enemy were also not idle, constructing new trenches and placing barbed wire entanglements

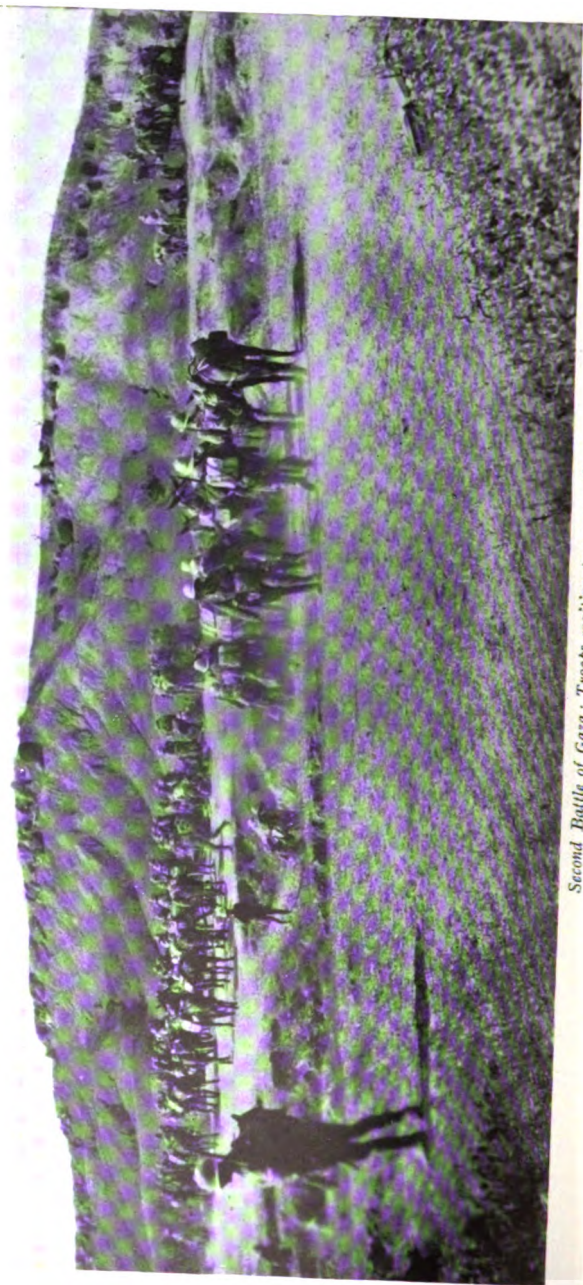
in front of those already dug. Shelling occurred throughout the day, but no movement of Turkish infantry was observed.

In the attack on the Ali el Muntar group of works on April 19th—the second phase—the 52nd Division was to attack the main position, Ali el Muntar, whilst the 54th Division, pivoting on the right of the 52nd, included in its objective the group of trenches at Sihan, east of Gaza, for which purpose the camelry were attached to the Division. The 53rd Division was put against the enemy trenches in the sand dunes south-west of Gaza, the line Samson Ridge—Sheikh Ajlin being the first objective. The 74th Division was in general reserve. The Desert Column was to make a containing attack. The Imperial Mounted Division, dismounted, was to advance against Rijm el Atawine. Part of the Anzac Division was to seize a spur at Baiket es Sana on the right, the remainder being in reserve to exploit any success achieved in this sector. The operation was to be supported by the guns of the French battleship “Requin” and H.M. Monitors 21 and 31. The Ali el Muntar series of works, the infantry objective, had been made formidable. The position commanded all the approaches from the south-west, east and south-east, and “had been very strongly fortified and well wired, in addition to the natural obstacles formed by thick cactus hedges, and had been made into a nest of machine guns, largely manned by Germans. The right of this line, between Gaza and the sea, ran in the arc of a circle west and south-west of the town. This section consisted of a double line of trenches and redoubts, strongly held by infantry and machine guns, well placed and concealed in impenetrable cactus hedges built on high mudbanks enclosing orchards and gardens on the outskirts of the town.” The cavalry seized Baiket es Sana at dawn. The Turks were ejected by the cavalry from the trenches at Sihan. The 54th Division made considerable progress at first, but suffered from enfilade fire from Ali el Muntar and was then checked, withstanding, in turn, a determined counter-attack. The 52nd Division, which had only one brigade (155th) heavily engaged owing to the narrow frontage, was able to reach Lees Hill, but was harassed in the attempt on Outpost Hill by destructive machine gun fire. There was a desperate struggle for the lunette which dominated the top of the hill. It was taken and retaken and was only relinquished by the Lowland Scots when the line was straightened in the rear after dark. The 53rd Division obtained possession of Samson Ridge. The tanks had not achieved the success expected, because of the destructive effect of the shellfire upon them. By 3 p.m., the attack had come to a standstill with 7,000 casualties. There were then in hand two brigades of the 52nd Division and the whole of the 74th Division, but the enemy still held Ali el Muntar and had not yet put his reserves into the fight. Sir Archibald Murray thinks that if General Dobell had thrown in his reserves, he might have taken the key of the position (Ali el Muntar), with a

1. Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches, p. 156.



Second Battle of Gaza: Down after digging in all night.



Second Battle of Gaza : Troops waiting to go over the top.

loss of a further 5,000 to 6,000 men, "but this would have left my small force, already reduced, with a difficult line of front to hold against increasing reinforcements of the enemy, who, owing to the conformation of the terrain, could attack from several directions." At 4 p.m. orders were issued to hold the ground with a view to a resumption of the attack next morning, but after receiving strong representations of the G.O.C. Eastern Force, supported by the commanders of the Desert Column and divisions, that a renewed offensive next morning "did not offer sufficient prospect of success to justify the very heavy casualties which such an operation would involve," the effort was finally relinquished and the ground which had been gained was consolidated. At that time the 53rd Division held the Samson Ridge—Sheikh Ajlin line, the 52nd was facing north towards Outpost Hill and Ali Muntar; the 54th Division kept the line south-eastwards and southwards round the Sheikh Abbas ridge to El Meshrefe, whence the mounted troops continued it to Wadi Ghazze. Not an inch of that ground was subsequently lost.

Let us now give a more detailed description of the doings of the 54th Division, although the 161st Brigade was not heavily involved. As the result of a decision that the movement of the Imperial Mounted Division against Atawine was not to be more than a demonstration, it was arranged that the boundary between the area of operations of the Desert Column and the 54th Division should be a line from Abu Mailik to Khirbet Sihan, running immediately south-east of both places. The Imperial Camel Brigade, which was protecting the right flank of the 54th, was placed under the orders of the divisional commander. The objective of the 54th Division extended from Khirbet Sihan trenches on the right to the Wadi Mukaddeme on the left, and included the enemy's stronghold south-west of Khirbet el Bir. It was divided into three sections—(a) Imperial Camel Brigade, with 1/7th Essex attached, to attack the enemy's trenches at Khirbet Sihan; (b) 163rd Brigade, with one tank attached, to force the Turkish positions covering the Gaza-Beersheba road, and (c) 162nd Brigade, on the left, to continue the offensive up to the Wadi Mukaddeme. The 161st Brigade and divisional squadron of Herts Yeomanry were in reserve under cover of the ridge at Sheikh Abbas. For the purpose of the preliminary bombardment and to cover the subsequent infantry advance, the 270th, 271st and 263rd Brigades, R.F.A., were posted south-east of the Mansura Ridge and south of Sheikh Abbas. There was a two hours' cannonade of the enemy's line, including heavy fire upon the Turkish strong points for forty minutes with gas shell. Unfortunately, visibility was poor and the definite effect could not be observed. The infantry assault was delivered at 7.30. On the right the 1/5th and 1/4th Norfolks led the 163rd Brigade, with one tank, and on the left the 1/4th Northants and 1/10th Londons were the foremost battalions of the 162nd Brigade, the respective brigade frontages being 1,800 and 1,200

yards. When over the crest the men were smitten by a heavy fire of all arms—high explosive and shrapnel—from the direction of Ali el Muntar and Fryer Hill and long range machine gun and rifle fire from the Gaza—Beersheba road. Nevertheless, with great vigour and steadiness, the brigades pushed on and by 8.30 a.m. the second ridge, distant about 500 yards from the first Turkish trenches, was reached by the 163rd Brigade. The tank had moved ahead and seized the redoubt, where it secured twenty prisoners and inflicted casualties, but half an hour later it was hit in three places and burnt out. The Norfolks, supported by the 8th Hants, pressed gallantly on. They suffered so considerably by cross fire from the trenches that they were stopped 500 yards from the enemy works, though parties of the 5th Norfolks penetrated a little farther. On the extreme right the Imperial Camel Brigade, with troops of the Desert Column, took Khirbet Sihān, but an attempt to move forward was frustrated. On the left the 157th Brigade, facing Ali el Muntar, did not leave its trenches at the same time as the 162nd Brigade, so that the latter sustained the full force of the Turkish enfilade fire. This notwithstanding, the advance was so steady that by 8.20 a.m. the 10th Londons had reached the enemy's foremost trenches. The opposition on their front was not strong, but they were much hampered by the enfilade fire from the artillery behind Ali el Muntar. The right battalion (1/4th Northants) encountered sharp machine gun fire when some 600 yards over the ridge, and this caused a slower rate of advance than on their right. Before the Northamptons were brought to a standstill, they were about 800 yards from the enemy line. A few men, including Lewis gunners, worked their way to within 120 yards of the Turks and enfiladed one or two of the trenches. No advance was made hereabouts after 10.40 a.m. At 9 a.m. the 10th Londons were astride the Gaza—Beersheba road and there the telegraph line was partially destroyed. As they were in front of the 52nd Division, the offensive was temporarily stayed in this sector, but at 9.15 the right of the latter division had so far advanced that the pressure was relieved. A counter-attack, two battalions strong, against the right of the 10th Londons was stopped on the crest by machine guns in the Wadi Mukaddeme and the rifle fire of the London men, who had withdrawn to a position 600 yards south-west of the crest. Here the line was consolidated and held till dusk. Another reaction by the enemy, this time against the 163rd Brigade, occurred shortly after mid-day and caused the evacuation of Tank Redoubt, forcing the line back for some distance, so that the 5th Suffolks were sent forward to stiffen the resistance and be ready for a forward movement. This counter-attack had the effect of leaving the right of the 1/4th Northants (162nd Brigade) dangerously exposed and at 1 p.m. the situation appeared so critical that a company of the 5th Bedfords was pushed into the gap between the two brigades. The line stood fast, however, and by 2.30 the situation was eased

by a forward movement by the 1/5th Suffolks, supported by 1/6th Essex (161st Brigade), which recovered Tank Redoubt, after which the Essex men were withdrawn under cover of Sheikh Abbas. The enemy were still active on the left against the 10th Londons and at 3.35 p.m. a body of 1,000 to 1,200 Turks, coming from the direction of Ali el Muntar and the Quarry, was broken up by the 270th Brigade, R.F.A. There was another attempt half an hour later, but this was also driven back in disorder by artillery fire. When dusk fell the Imperial Camel Brigade, with the 1/7th Essex, were on the right and then in succession were the 161st, 162nd and 163rd Brigades. During the night there was a readjustment which brought the 163rd Brigade into reserve, in preparation for a resumption of the offensive next day. Soon after midnight, however, it was notified that the attack had been postponed and that all positions were to be consolidated and wired, and the trenches to be held thinly, so as to provide the largest possible reserves for any further counter-offensive. When dawn came the front line was well dug in and the greater part of it wired. The second battle of Gaza was over and it remained to count up the losses. How severely the 54th Division suffered may be judged from the strength of the Brigades on April 20th :—

161st —2,300 rifles.

162nd—1,950 rifles.

163rd—1,100 rifles.

Total 5,350

Well might Sir Archibald Murray write his appreciation of the great skill with which "General Hare handled his fine division throughout the day."

The orders for communication of the infantry with the artillery will be read with interest. The flags used by the 54th Division to indicate their position to the artillery were of black and yellow horizontal stripes. There were also detailed instructions in respect of Very lights and signals. Green lights, fired in pairs, at half-minute intervals, till answered by infantry brigade headquarters by a similar signal, denoted that the enemy were attacking, but the warning was not to be made by anyone below the rank of squadron or company commander. Red lights, fired in pairs at half-minute intervals till answered by infantry headquarters by a similar signal, denoted call for artillery fire on pre-arranged night lines and was not to be made by anyone below the rank of regimental or battalion commander and not used at all if the telephone was in working order. Green and red lights, fired in pairs at half-minute intervals till similarly answered, indicated that artillery fire on pre-arranged night lines was no longer required. White lights were to be used for purposes of illumination.

The Essex Brigade—less the 7th Essex detached with the Imperial Camel Brigade—as will be gathered from the narrative given above, did not play an active part in the second battle of Gaza. It was in support to the rest of the Division and the

casualties sustained were due to shell-fire. They, however, shared in the same detailed preparation and all ranks were informed of the exact part which they were expected to play. A great deal of confidence was reposed in the tanks, which was stimulated by the optimism of an enthusiastic tank officer who attended a senior officers' conference. It was not then sufficiently realized that tanks were rather vulnerable to shell-fire when crossing in small numbers a lengthy tract of country between the trench systems. In the second Gaza battle the Turkish artillery concentrated upon them when they were in No Man's Land and at least three of them were rendered helpless in the early stages. Early on the morning of April 17th the Brigade assembled at Wadi Sharta, a shallow gully which was attractive because of its rural aspect. The men had full equipment, less haversacks. They carried 170 rounds of small arms ammunition and in the pack were the iron ration, a day's ration on mobile scale, waterproof sheet, cardigan, or spare shirt, pair of socks, cap comforter, sterilizing tablets, mess tin and small kit. Two sandbags were tucked under the shoulder straps. Gas masks were also taken and worn at the alert position when the British artillery were firing gas shells, though they were returned to the slung position when later on the Brigade was advancing towards Sheikh Abbas. All day long the boom of artillery was heard and there was much speculation as to the progress of the fighting, for definite news was scarce. In the late afternoon the commanding officers attended a conference at Brigade headquarters, after which the adjutants had to ride with Colonel Bowker (6th Essex) to inspect the outpost line near Dumb-bell Hill, which was to be taken over after dark from the 163rd Brigade. They rode hard in the gathering dusk and it was extremely difficult to remember the bearings. Upon arrival of the Battalions, about midnight, outposts were detailed and the remainder of the Brigade settled down to rest. At daybreak on April 18th a move was made to a deep gully at the rear of Dumb-bell Hill. The 5th Essex were the first to arrive, but had some anxiety as to whether they had identified the exact spot because the rest of the Brigade had not put in an appearance. Fears were allayed, however, when the remaining battalions, with brigade headquarters, marched in a little later. From dawn onwards there was a terrific artillery duel, whilst the Brigade lined the gullies at the rear of Dumb-bell Hill and waited in reserve. During the morning there was a heavy fall of cliff and half a dozen men of the 5th Essex were buried alive. There was feverish work to rescue them and eventually they were dug out seemingly little the worse for the experience. At 6.30 on the morning of April 19th the Brigade took up position behind Sheikh Abbas Ridge, still finding cover in a gully. The main attack was then raging and the noise was terrific. About 1 p.m. orders were received to move up to the Ridge in expectation that the Brigade was once more going into action. For a considerable

distance the units could only move in single file and as they went up, coming from the other direction was a long file of wounded men belonging to other units of the 54th Division and whose hurts had been only temporarily dressed. "It is a fine thing," wrote one who was there, "to go charging into battle, but to have to make your way slowly forward over uneven ground in single file with a stream of wounded men coming back, most of whom are obviously in pain, is very trying. There is too much of the feeling, 'First look on this picture (the sound man) and then on that (the shattered man).'" The movement was ordered to assist the 163rd Brigade, which was being counter-attacked. The 6th Essex were sent on as soon as they arrived, but the Battalion was not seriously engaged and at 6 p.m. the Brigade took over an outpost line at Sheikh Abbas. Those who accompanied the Brigadier upon the preliminary inspection had a wonderful view of the battle ground. Fighting was taking place over a very wide area, in which cavalry and camelry were advancing under vigorous shrapnel fire from the Turkish guns. At 1 a.m. on April 20th the Brigade moved to another part of Sheikh Abbas, the right of the 162nd Brigade being met in the direction of El Hawadi. The 4th, 5th and 6th Essex occupied the front line, with the 7th Essex, who had rejoined from the Imperial Camel Brigade, in reserve. Although very tired, the men worked with a will, for it was realized that cover from shellfire after daybreak depended upon the trenches that were made. Whilst the infantry dug, the R.E. put up the barbed wire entanglements. The advance upon Gaza had been stayed. Although the Brigade was not in the thick of it, the frequent moves were very trying. Great vigilance was required in holding the outpost line and in the final stages the rapid creation of a trench system was laborious and exhausting work. Sheikh Abbas was 2,000 yards from the Turks and overlooked their position. It was bitterly cold for the first few nights, as the men were without their blankets, and they tied sandbags round their bare knees to keep them warm, whilst they huddled up close together in holes scraped in the ground. The troops also cooked their own meals, the popular dish being "bully stodge" and stewed apricots. Those who were unfortunate enough to be wounded—and they crawled in from the battlefield for seven nights following—had a trying journey to railhead, either on a camel, a stretcher swaying on either side, or in a sandcart, bumping up and down the wadis. At Qantara, however, the accommodation was good and patients were not kept waiting long for the comfortable hospital train to Cairo or Alexandria.

4th The 1/4th Essex (Major G. G. Ewer) moved with the rest of the Brigade from Wadi en Nukhabir at noon on April 19th in support of the 163rd Brigade to Sheikh Abbas and was heavily shelled whilst so doing, having two killed and three wounded, with seven suffering from shellshock. In the evening the Battalion dug in on the left of the line held by the 161st Brigade

on the Ridge and remained there until 7 p.m. on April 20th, having three casualties from shellshock, when the 1/7th Essex
5th relieved them.—The 1/5th Essex (Major W. E. Wilson, D.S.O.), who only had two men wounded, dug in with the rest of the Brigade at Sheikh Abbas Ridge. Upon the morning of the battle Lieut.-Colonel T. Gibbons reported for duty, but the command of the Battalion was retained by Major Wilson until
6th the close of the day's operations.—The 1/6th Essex (Lieut. Colonel W. J. Bowker, C.M.G., D.S.O.) sustained eight casualties, mainly from shellshock, whilst moving forward on April 19th. At 7.30 a.m. the Battalion was ordered to support the 1/5th Suffolks, of the 163rd Brigade, who had been held up, the line of direction being a derelict tank. The three first lines of "D" Company had advanced over the crest of a crater and through a fresh barley field when they were ordered to withdraw, having three wounded from rifle fire. Further advance was stopped and the 1/6th Essex took over part of the outpost line facing east and north of Sheikh Abbas Ridge, with the Imperial Camel Corps on the right and 1/5th Essex on the left. One company and Battalion headquarters were held in reserve on the corner of Sheikh Abbas escarpment. Later the Battalion was ordered to the reserve position, the men rather listless with disappointment, and at 7.45 p.m. the Imperial Camel Brigade and the 1/7th Essex withdrew through the Battalion. At daybreak on April 20th the frontage was reduced. There was an alarm of a Turkish counter attack, which was, however, driven off by shellfire. The enemy were subsequently seen searching at their leisure over
7th the battlefield.—The 1/7th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel L. S. Delamare) were divided throughout the whole of the battle. On April 16th "A" and "C" Companies (under Captain E. Whur, M.C.) were detached to the vicinity of Wadi Sharta as artillery escort, the remainder of the Battalion being in reserve. "B" and "D" Companies relieved "A" and "C" at 6 p.m. on April 17th. Battalion headquarters left half an hour later for Dumb-bell Hill, via Charing Cross, at which point "A" and "C" Companies rejoined. April 18th was uneventful except that the Battalion was moved nearer the firing line at the Dip and then on the day when the 54th Division went into action (April 19th) the 1/7th Essex were in support of the Imperial Camel Brigade, as already explained. At 5.45 a.m. the Battalion marched to Charing Cross, where "B" and "D" Companies reported and the G.O.C. Camel Brigade ordered the Battalion to remain in support of his attack upon Khirbet Sihan. At 6.30 a.m. the 1/7th were transferred to a position in rear of the Hong Kong and Singapore Battery in support of the right attack and at 10.30 a.m. the Battalion was pushed forward to assist the right flank of the 3rd Battalion, Imperial Camel Brigade, which had been exposed owing to the withdrawal of the Australian Light Horse and it covered the retirement of that battalion at dusk. Then, in turn, the 7th Essex withdrew, "A," "B"

and "D" Companies in the direction of Sheikh Abbas Ridge and "C" Company remaining upon the right flank of the Imperial Camel Brigade. The Battalion rejoined the 161st Brigade south of Sheikh Abbas Ridge, where later "C" Company also came in. It was a tiring day, but happily the casualties were light, two being killed and seven wounded. Among the former was 2nd Lieut. H. J. A. Wiltshire. The next day the 7th Essex were on trench duty north of Sheikh Abbas Ridge in relief of the 1/4th Essex.

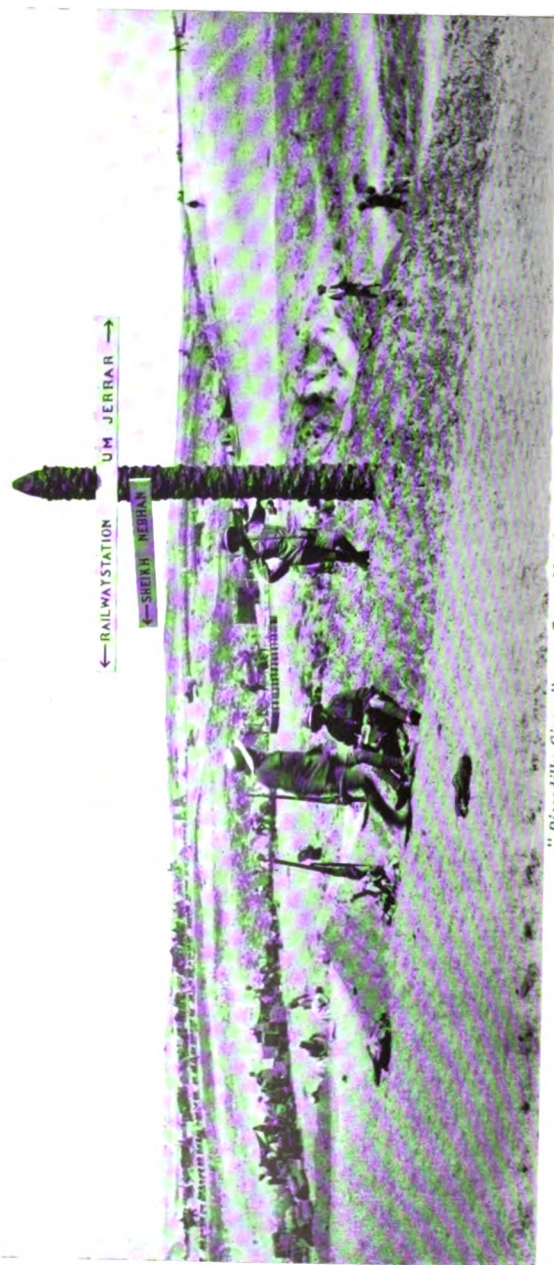
M.G. After the losses and exhaustion of the Gaza operation the 161st Machine Gun Company concentrated at In Seirat for rest and reorganization. Among the changes was that Lieut. Clive Needell took command of No. 1 Section, and Captain Randolph Banks joined the Company. On April 4th, in order to deceive the enemy airmen, the Company undertook a route march in the direction of Balah. Then, as soon as a hostile 'plane was sighted, they began marching in the direction of Egypt, only to sit down again the moment it had disappeared. When the 52nd and 54th Divisions pushed in the enemy outposts at Mansura and Sheikh Abbas on April 17th, the first day of the Second Battle of Gaza, the Company left In Seirat at 1.45 a.m. and arrived on the Wadi Sharta three hours later. There they stayed until 6.30 p.m., when they moved to Dumb-bell Hill, which was reached at 9 p.m. The next day (April 18th) the Company left Dumb-bell Hill at 4.30 a.m., with camels, and rested in a gulley from 6.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., when they marched for the "Dip." On April 19th the second unsuccessful attack on Gaza was made. In the afternoon the Company were moved up behind Sheikh Abbas and shortly before dark orders came that one section was to go forward with the 6th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel Bowker), to assist the 163rd Brigade. No. 2 Section (Lieut. R. H. S. Coleman) was told off, but just as they were on the move the order was cancelled.

THE INTERREGNUM.

The decision to suspend the direct attack upon Gaza was followed by the succession of Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode to the command of the Eastern Force in place of General Dobell, and the leadership of the Desert Column accordingly devolved upon Major-General Sir H. G. Chauvel. Instructions for the advance upon Jerusalem were varied by the War Office to orders that Sir Archibald Murray should take any favourable opportunity of defeating the Turkish forces opposed to him and to exploit the success as far as resources permitted. The enemy were continually reinforced and early in May it was estimated that the Turks had eight divisions in that theatre of war, with additional cavalry, artillery and machine guns. These were used to strengthen the positions between Gaza and Hureira. The intention was to hold the British on the Palestine front whilst the Yilderim Army was concentrated for the recapture of Baghdad. Meanwhile, Sir Archibald Murray maintained his line, a front of some 14,000 yards, from Sheikh Ajlin, on the sea, to the north-eastern corner of the Sheikh Abbas ridge. Thence it turned back through Sharta towards the Wadi Ghazze, with the right extended to Shellal to protect the southern flank. To secure greater power of manœuvre and to retain the upper line of the Wadi Ghazze, a branch railway was commenced from Rafa to Shellal. Water was plentiful at the latter place and the pipe line was extended on to the plateau overlooking Shellal from the west. The double tracking of the railway from Qantara was decided upon in order to assist the transport of artillery and the 12in. pipe line was duplicated between Rafah and Qantara. Reinforcements were arriving from Salonika and India. During May the Northern sector, from the sea to Sharta, was so strengthened that it was possible to hold it with two divisions, thus enabling the other two divisions to become general reserve. The mounted troops were employed in constant reconnaissance towards the east and north-east. They also carried out a successful raid on the Beersheba-Auja railway on May 22nd-23rd. Whilst Gaza was heavily bombarded and parties were actively employed cutting wire to strengthen the impression that an attack upon the city was imminent, the mounted troops threatened the north-west of Beersheba and destroyed the Irqaiyiq railway viaduct. The attention of the enemy being thus distracted, raiding parties were sent against the railway, completely wrecking thirteen miles of track and inflicting other serious damage. In June came Sir Archibald Murray's retirement from command and in his last dispatch he paid tribute to the infantry, "The 52nd, 53rd and 54th Divisions, though actively engaged for over a year in the Sinai Peninsula, had not, since their reorganization after the operations



Before Gaza : GEN. DODDINGTON'S BATTLE HEADQUARTERS



"Piccadilly Circus," near Gaza, March-April, 1917.

in the Dardanelles, been able to show how they had improved out of all knowledge in training and discipline, and in all that goes to make up an excellent fighting organization. Under severe trial, they have now given ample proof of the finest soldierly qualities." The achievement of the outgoing Commander-in-Chief was to drive the Turk wholly out of Egypt. "Besides, with material British support, the Arabs had destroyed Turkish authority in the Hejaz. After the defeat at Romani, the Turk had displayed no initiative whatever against us. The success of the British offensive—for success it was, notwithstanding the check at Gaza—may be attributed to the mobility given to the whole force and to the development and able use of the mounted divisions—Yeomanry, Australian and New Zealand troops. The mounted arm was constantly employed, in spite of the difficulties of desert, sand, season and water. It was used in reconnaissances, in raids, as a screen, as a mobile reserve, in envelopment and in pursuit. The Sinai Desert was the training ground in which these mounted troops were schooled for their later exploits in Palestine and Syria. The Spring of 1917 had certainly been disappointing for the British, but the Turk had cold comfort, too. His prestige in the East was very low; he had been turned out of Sinai and defeated in the west; two of the holy cities—Baghdad and Mecca—were lost, and he was blockaded in Medina. Nevertheless, he was gathering himself together for a great effort to recover Mesopotamia with German aid."

General Sir Edmund Allenby assumed command on June 28th, 1917, and prepared for the resumption of the offensive campaign in the autumn. The deadlock on the Western Front seemed complete and it was felt that a break would have to come elsewhere. Moreover, the Russian revolution had removed pressure from the Turks. "It was calculated that von Falkenhayn would not venture upon the long march from Syria to Baghdad while he was under threat of attack from Palestine; so strategically it appeared to be much the soundest and most economical course to defend Baghdad by reinforcing Allenby and enabling him to invade Palestine. The political object of Allenby's first campaign in Palestine was then the occupation of Jerusalem; the strategic object was to break up the Yildirim Army." The new G.O.C.-in-Chief found that "Gaza had been made into a strong modern fortress, heavily entrenched and wired, offering every facility for protracted defence." The Turks held a line of thirty miles, commanded at the end of October by von Kressenstein, while the British held a front of twenty-two, from the sea to Qamle. After careful inspection, the Commander-in-Chief reported that to conduct a successful offensive in Palestine he would need two more fully-trained divisions, eleven 18-pounder and 4.5in. howitzer batteries, six groups of heavy artillery, three squadrons, R.F.C. Accordingly,

1. The Campaigns in Palestine and Egypt. Major-General Sir F. Maurice, *Army Quarterly*.

the 60th and 10th Divisions were moved from Salonika, whilst the artillery was sent from Italy and England and the Indian Cavalry were despatched from France. Preparations went forward for an assault upon Beersheba to secure its water supplies and as a centre from which the left flank of the main Turkish position between Hureira and Sheria could be assaulted. General Headquarters were moved from Cairo to Rafah and the base from Alexandria to Qantara. The Eastern Force was abolished and the troops east of the Canal were formed into the XX Corps, XXI Corps, Desert Mounted Corps and Palestine Lines of Communication. The 54th Division (with an infantry strength on October 20th of 340 officers and 11,147 other ranks) became part of the XXI Corps, with the 52nd and 75th Divisions and a small composite force of other nationalities, and was actively engaged in the trench operations which led the enemy to believe that another attack upon Gaza was imminent. It was not until mid-October that Constantinople and Berlin acceded to the urgent representations from Palestine that more troops were needed to combat the British threat. Then it was that the Turkish Army destined for Mesopotamia was diverted, but it was too late, for on October 31st Beersheba fell to Allenby's onslaught and the way was opened to Jerusalem.

During May the 161st Brigade was at Sheikh Abbas on the right of the divisional front without serious casualty, with a strength which varied from 91 officers and 2,539 other ranks to 89 officers and 2,579 other ranks. A double apron fence ran along the whole front, the country beyond consisting of undulating barley and wheat fields. The enemy were from 2,000 to 4,000 yards away and the trenches were not, therefore, subjected to rifle fire, but the enemy artillery frequently shelled them with shrapnel and heavy explosive. There was a substantial increase of the effective strength during June, for on the last day of that month it had risen to 121 officers and 3,761 other ranks, with a fighting strength of 98 officers and 3,449 other ranks. The casualties were light at this period. The Brigade was at Regent's Park until June 12th and then occupied Kurd Hill until the 30th. During this month the Brigade was holding the right sub-section of the coastal section of the line. The enemy's artillery was inactive and there was little sniping by them. The Essex night patrols also did not see or hear of Turkish patrols. The trenches were maintained and existing communications deepened, whilst others were constructed. The Brigade was at Kurd Hill throughout July, where General Allenby paid a visit on the 6th. Captain Banks, of the Brigade Machine Gun Company, died of wounds on July 4th. A detachment of the 163rd Brigade raided Beach Post and to support them the Brigade, with the Machine Gun Company, made a demonstration by constant bursts of rifle and machine gun-fire and the use of Very lights, to which the enemy retorted with three-quarters of an hour's shelling. The Turkish guns were

again active on the early morning of July 19th, when it was estimated that between 1,100 and 1,500 shells fell in the 1/4th Essex area, but with no casualty. On July 20th the Brigade co-operated in a raid on Umbrella Hill and the next day a note in the Brigade Diary states, "The Kurd Valley is no longer held in strength, a line of picquets finding sentry groups being posted in the trenches by night and then withdrawn by day, when Kurd Valley is watched from Blazed Hill and Heart Hill." The 1/5th Bedfords made a raid on Umbrella Hill on July 27th, and the 161st Brigade support area in the rear of Lees and Blazed Hills was heavily shelled and damage was caused. On July 31st the effective strength was 135 officers and 4,269 other ranks and the fighting strength 97 officers and 3,816 other ranks. The Brigade was relieved on August 3rd by the 159th Brigade and went to Regent's Park, with the exception of the 1/4th Hants, who rejoined the 162nd Brigade. Captain T. R. G. Bennett became staff captain vice Captain F. G. Bright, appointed D.A.Q.M.G., Qantara. The fighting strength on August 31st was 123 officers and 3,862 other ranks and the casualties were eight killed and eleven wounded. During September the Brigade was at Marine View, where, on the 4th, Captain A. C. M. Paris, M.C., Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, became brigade major vice Captain H. L. Wright, appointed to XXI Corps. The fighting strength was 108 officers and 3,755 other ranks. Casualties only numbered 11, three being killed. The Brigade was at Regent's Park nearly all the month of October, when Lieut. J. H. T. Benford, 1/7th Essex, became acting staff captain in the place of Captain Bennett, in hospital. Four men were killed and eight wounded and the month closed with a fighting strength of 136 officers and 3,983 other ranks.

- 4th Major B. C. Wells assumed command of the 1/4th Essex on the evening of April 26th, when the Battalion was temporarily attached to the 163rd Brigade. It was in reserve in a branch of the Wadi en Nukhabir and supplied a working party of two officers and 100 other ranks to the 161st Brigade in Sheikh Abbas ridge. On May 6th the Battalion took over trenches on the ridge from the 1/5th Bedfords and 1/10th Londons, with "A" Company and battalion headquarters in rear. The 1/5th Essex were on the right and 1/10th Londons on the left. A patrol of four men, under 2nd-Lieut. A. J. Beach, left "B" Company on a compass bearing of 50 degrees and, having walked 900 yards, searched the ground on Northampton Ridge, collecting the equipment and ammunition of the British killed lying there. Lieut. Beach's patrol went to the Ridge again the next night and another went out under 2nd-Lieut. Johnstone and searched the Wadi. "D" Company took over a further portion of the line from the 1/4th Northants, who had relieved the 1/10th Londons. On May 11th three dogs were observed about 600 yards from the trenches, each tied up about forty yards apart, presumably to give warning of the approach of patrols. They were shot by snipers from the

trenches. Considerable movement of the enemy was noticed to and from Ali el Muntar later in the day. Two unarmed men were found on May 13th by a patrol and taken to battalion headquarters, whilst the next day two deserters were brought in—one of them a young Turkish officer, complete with sword. Another prisoner obtained about the same time was a sniper who had lost his way in the morning mist. Two Turkish battalions were seen moving along the Beersheba road on May 17th, coming from the direction of Gaza, and later another was noted, with transport, apparently going into Gaza, but it turned north-west and went up the Wadi Mukaddeme. The artillery opened fire and scattered the transport. The Battalion was relieved on May 18th and went into reserve, proceeding to Regent's Park on the 25th. There bathing was much enjoyed, but on May 28th the Battalion was on the move again, this time in relief of the Imperial Camel Corps. "A" Company occupied Jago's Post, with "B" in support. "D" were at Hill 310, with "C" in reserve at a wadi in the rear, in which were also Battalion headquarters. Deserters continued to trickle in. On June 9th the 1/4th were moved to the Wadi en Nukhabir and next day a company of the 5th Devons were attached for training in trench warfare, a platoon to each company. The Battalion marched to Kurd Hill on June 13th, where it rejoined the 161st Brigade in reserve, and a reinforcement of 194 was received from the 83rd Training Battalion. On June 29th the unit took over from the 1/6th the line held from Sniper's Spur through Heart Hill to the Es Sire road, with three companies in the front and one in reserve. A draft of 30 other ranks reported on July 1st and on the 4th a patrol, under 2nd-Lieut. Saunders, had an exciting encounter with a party of about fifteen Turks, when the former threw hand grenades into the midst of the enemy. Reinforcements to the number of 52 joined on July 9th and twice enemy working parties were dispersed by artillery fire on report from a patrol sent out by the Battalion. The 4th Essex were relieved by the 2/5th Hants and went into reserve in Happy Valley, supplying strong working parties to the end of the month for roadmaking and wiring. Specialist training was intensive. The active personnel of headquarters and all officers and N.C.O.'s of "A" and "B" Companies were at the Divisional Training School at St. James's Park from August 1st to 5th. The Battalion moved from Happy Valley to Regent's Park on August 2nd and on the 5th the officers and N.C.O.'s of "C" and "D" Companies took the places of their comrades at the Training School. Then, on the 12th, the whole Battalion went to St. James' Park for drill and training until the 18th, when it was transferred to Regent's Park, and thence, on August 25th, to the Coastal Sector and Welsh Redoubt. There was little activity, though on the 29th the line was advanced about 500 yards by the 229th Brigade from Jones's Post to the right of the Battalion line. The wiring of the new front was completed by

the 1/5th and 1/7th Essex next day. Large Turkish patrols, consisting of five groups of about fifty each, fired on the working parties on the night of September 3rd, but were forced to retire some 300 yards, when they formed up in two lines. The artillery put down a shrapnel barrage to prevent the enemy party retiring. This had the effect of scattering them and they fled in disorder. 2nd-Lieut. W. B. Coomer and 34 other ranks were attached to 484th Field Company, R.E., on September 11th, and a patrol, led by 2nd Lieut. Saunders, left a quantity of pamphlets near the enemy line on September 14th. Early in October the Battalion bivouac was shifted to Regent's Park, about 500 yards from the seashore, and on the 18th sixteen candidates were confirmed by the Bishop of Jerusalem. A patrol of one officer (2nd Lieut. Dinn) and forty other ranks, in the Coastal Sector, covering a reconnaissance party, consisting of Lieut.-Colonel B. C. Wells, the Adjutant and G.S.O.3. 54th Division, came in touch with the enemy and inflicted casualties. The month closed with the receipt of drafts of 71 other ranks. All was in readiness for the next great encounter with the enemy.

5th On the night of April 21st-22nd the 1/5th were relieved in the right sector by the 1/6th Essex and in the left by the 5th Bedfords, at which time Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons resumed command of the unit. The Battalion moved back to Dumb-bell Hill and relieved the 3rd Company, Imperial Camel Brigade, which had taken part in the battle. This Company had entrenched its front and headquarters dugouts in a wadi to the rear and when the 5th took these over they settled down to trench warfare in a way which had been unknown since Gallipoli, the R.E. assisting in the construction of shellproof dug-outs. The Hill was reached by a series of wadis, which afforded ample covered communication, and the enemy's shelling was sufficiently listless to allow movement in the open. The chief trouble was the intense heat. From Dumb-bell Hill on the left could be seen Tank Redoubt, which received its name from a derelict tank lying there; in the front was the slope upon which the dead of the Northhamptons and Norfolks still lay thick, as if, wrote Colonel Gibbons, "they had been washed up on a shelving beach by a high tide and left there on the ebb." On the right, some three miles away, was Atawine Redoubt, on the Beersheba Road, where the Turks could be seen entrenching and in between was the Wadi Sihan, one of the most fertile valleys of that region. On the far right was "Vale of Dead Horse," the name of which sufficiently indicates the reason for the choice. Cavalry patrols were seen in contact almost daily, in full observation from the infantry outpost line. At the end of April R.S.M. T. E. Fry was gazetted second-lieutenant. The Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Force, Sir Philip Chetwode, made an inspection on May 3rd, on the same day that Lieut. Horton and an outpost patrol brought in two Turkish soldiers of the 167th Regiment, 53rd Division. On May 6th the Battalion was relieved

by Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, and took over the centre of a new Brigade line from the 1/5th Bedfords on Sheikh Abbas Ridge. The trench lay in the plain, well in front of the escarpment, and it was only fully occupied by day ; at night all were withdrawn except a sufficient number of men to maintain observation. The move was by moonlight and enemy aeroplanes were active, one of them bombing the Royal West Kents and causing forty casualties. The Battalion kept off the beaten track, though the camel transport, moving in a parallel column, caused perturbation by reason of the metal fantassie flashing in the moon's rays. There were no casualties, but there was one moment of suspense, when an enemy machine, returning from Balah—the railhead where bombs were dropped that night—seemed about to plane down upon the column, but the men were halted, kept silence and escaped unpleasant attention. Officers' patrols were employed in bringing back identity discs and other articles found upon our dead, which in almost every case had been stripped of their outer clothing and boots. The Turk was inactive, but on the night of May 11th a patrol led by C.S.M. Coote observed an enemy machine gun patrol near Essex Hill, held by a picquet of the 1/6th Essex. The enemy retired under a sharp fire of the men of both battalions, but tried again to penetrate Essex Hill on May 13th. They failed on this occasion also and some prisoners were taken, who said they had been promised £10 for every prisoner they brought back. Two men of an enemy patrol were taken on the night of May 17th and the next day the Battalion went into "rest" in a gully upon relief by the Ayr and Lanark and Devonshire Yeomanry (16th Devonshires). On May 25th the Battalion moved to Regent's Park, "an atrocious libel on London's green and well-watered health spot." Until June 12th there was daily training, with sea bathing as a relaxation, but the most onerous duty was the march of working parties three miles nightly to dig trenches in front of the 52nd Division. The Battalion lived in dug-outs in the sides of the wadis and was close to the 1/4th Essex. By detachments all ranks received training in gas warfare. A 54th Divisional Gas School had been improvised behind the line in charge of Captain Mitchell, 6th Essex (a thoroughly qualified analytical chemist). The instruction was new to most of the officers and men, but had to be undertaken because of the state of trench warfare which had ensued. The fact was, however, that throughout the campaign the 161st Brigade was never in a gas attack, either on one side or the other. Among the awards announced at this time was the D.C.M. to Corporal T. C. Main, R.A.M.C., attached to the Battalion, concerning whom the story is told that shortly afterwards Main, in common with all other R.A.M.C. details, was withdrawn to a medical unit and medical officers attached to infantry regiments had to train the men in first-aid. When Main reached the unit to which he was ordered the C.O. noticed the ribbon and questioned him about it. Apparently

not satisfied with his replies, he wrote to the adjutant of the 1/5th Essex enquiring whether the corporal was so authorized and Captain Finn had pleasure in replying that this deserving N.C.O. had amply earned the decoration. On June 12th the 54th Division moved to the Coastal Sector in relief of the 52nd. The divisional line ran from the sea at Sheikh Ajlin to Lees Hill, a frontage of about 7,000 yards. The 161st Brigade took over from the 157th Brigade and the 1/5th Essex were placed on the trenches formerly occupied by the 5th Argyll and Sutherlands, stretching from Lees Hill to the centre of Kurd Valley. The Battalion moved off from Regents Park at 7 p.m. and were in position four hours later—there to remain until August 3rd-4th, a period of over seven weeks. The enemy were active and improvement of trenches went on incessantly. Reinforcements were being constantly absorbed, but there was still a shortage of officers, which threw increased responsibility upon those with the Battalion. There was good covered communication by means of a deep gully from the Brigade headquarters behind the crest of Queen's Hill to the Battalion sector. The latter was constructed in two lines, with frequent communication trenches and dug-outs. In the rear a wadi ran laterally and conveniently, wherein dumps were safely established. The enemy's front line on Outpost Hill was about 500 yards away, over which there was good observation, with an excellent field of fire. Patrols were sent out nightly and listening posts organized, whilst, as in Gallipoli, much attention was paid to sniping. Two unfortunate fatalities occurred owing to mistakes by sentries. There were two inspections by the G.O.C. Division. The Turkish artillery was increasingly active. July was hot and tried the men severely. The moonlight nights enabled enemy working parties to be dispersed, but the Turks had the annoying habit of using indirect machine gun-fire, which caused trouble to those in charge of ration convoys. Two deserters from the 79th Regiment, 27th Division, surrendered on July 3rd and thereafter prisoners came in frequently, but whether as a result of the pamphleteering activity of our patrols Colonel Gibbons could not be sure. "One explained," he wrote, "that he was one of a double sentry group and that he walked across while his fellow sentry was asleep. Another, on being questioned as to the apparently undue number of their troops on outpost duty, explained that one of their duties was to prevent their own people from walking into our lines. Some complained of brutal treatment by non-commissioned officers, particularly towards Christians and Armenians, of whom they appeared to have considerable numbers. Another complaint was that men were allowed to purchase their discharge and then were immediately afterwards pressed into service again. Two Bulgarians gave valuable information. They came in early one morning and were seen in the light of the dawn by the Turks, who opened a brisk fire at them. The enemy's army was a queer mixture of real, stout fighters, pukka Turks—soldiers

by nature and by choice, as their fathers had been before them—and every type of scallywag under the sun who had been forced into their service.” There was some counter pamphleteering, but retaliation was prompt and severe, for on July 14th the 1/8th Hampshires raided advanced positions known as Sugar Loaf and Beach post, and inflicted severe casualties with the bayonet. The 1/5th co-operated by frequent bursts of Lewis gun-fire and were shelled in retaliation. The enemy put over much shrapnel and high explosive from the direction of Tank Redoubt and Gaza when the 5th Bedfords raided Umbrella Hill, and two men of the Essex Battalion were killed and five were wounded, whilst others received shellshock. When the 1/5th Bedfords again raided the Hill on the night of July 27th the enemy barraged the front of the line held by the 1/5th Essex with shrapnel and minnenwerfer and also dusted the gully and communication and support trenches. Over 650 shells (77mm., shrapnel and H.E., and 4.2 and 5.9) fell into the sector, but only two men were wounded. There was increased enemy activity, but it was kept in check by the R.A.F., whose ascendancy in the air became more and more marked. At the end of July the Battalion had a strength of 29 officers and 1,010 other ranks. On the night of August 3rd-4th the 1/5th were relieved by the 4th Welch Regiment and marched to Regent’s Park by way of Tell el ‘Ujul, near Wadi Ghazze, renowned as once the site of a camp of Saladin, the famous Moslem antagonist of Richard I. For a short time—(18th to 24th)—the Battalion was at St. James’s Park, free from enemy shelling. The period from August 4th to 18th was actively employed in training for trench warfare. A trench section was dug and officers and other ranks who had received training at the Imperial School of Instruction at Zeitun, near Cairo, were tutors to the remainder of the Battalion. Parties of officers and other ranks also attended a school run by the Divisional R.E. Company, at which the rapid erection of barbed wire fences was taught. At St. James’s Park the Battalion took over the area which had been occupied by the 1/4th Essex. It was very comfortable and had good dug-outs, showing that the 4th had made the best of an unfavourable camping ground. The principal trouble was that the constant traffic had worn off much of the grass and, as there was a fairly stiff breeze from the sea, there was some inconvenience from the dust clouds which arose. When the 54th Division relieved the 53rd in the Coastal Sector, on August 25th, the 1/5th took over from the 2/4th West Kents, in divisional reserve, at Marine View (a sand dune half a mile from the sea and two miles in rear of the front line). Room was made the next day for the Fife and Forfarshire Yeomanry. The 229th Brigade (Yeomanry Division) advanced the line by about 500 yards to flatten out the re-entrant between Jones’s Post and Fusilier Ridge on the night of August 29th-30th. The 1/5th provided wiring parties and two companies as a covering party. In the bright moonlight the working parties were seen

by the Turks, who opened a heavy fire upon them. The Battalion had four men killed and five wounded, one of them being Sergeant Mitson, of "A" Company. The next night an effort was made to complete the wiring, but the moonlight revealed the workers to the Turks. The strength at the end of August was 26 officers and 985 other ranks. The first fortnight in September was spent at Marine View, but on the 15th the 1/5th took the place of the 1/4th in "Yeomanry" sector, where the defences were in the sand, partly trench and partly breastwork, well concealed, except when the westering sun cast a shadow for a brief period. The Battalion held three lines—the first that commenced on August 29th, the second the original front line, with Welsh Redoubt as the third line. By day the front line was occupied by two small groups of snipers; the second, the line of resistance, by ten platoons, and the Redoubt by a company. The remaining two platoons were in section reserve. At night the front line was held up by four platoons, sent up from the second line. The Battalion strength on September 30th was 22 officers and 930 other ranks. During the month Orderly Room Sergeant Smith left to be gazetted second-lieutenant and was posted to the 1/6th Essex and when the 1/6th and 1/4th were combined in 1919 he became assistant adjutant. Patrol work and trench improvement were incessant. Whilst the Turks' offensive spirit seemed to be decreasing that of the British increased. An interesting experiment was made on the night of October 5th, when a patrol of two officers and two platoons left their trenches at 6 p.m. and took up a position 200 yards from El Arish Redoubt. Their duty was to observe and direct by telephone our artillery fire, which they did with such accuracy that enemy patrols and working parties suffered severely. Colonel Gibbons says that the patrol was also designed to fight enemy parties that were about and when a Turkish patrol appeared in front and another on the right flank, the 1/5th patrol was found too unwieldy to manœuvre and there was a loss of cohesion. "In my humble opinion, it was a mistake to send out two whole platoons in the dark nearly half a mile from our own line, with a practical certainty of having to manœuvre to meet uncertain enemy action, and I venture to think that the object of the patrol could have been better achieved by an artillery observer and telephonist covered by a few scouts specially selected for the work." Lance-Sergeant Fryatt and Private Wood were killed. The Battalion was in Regents Park again on October 7th, for the Division had been replaced by the 52nd. It was a very dark night and the 1/5th found their way with great difficulty. There was a Battalion sports meeting on October 27th, followed by a concert in the evening by officers of the Tank Corps, which was chiefly memorable because a great storm arose and brought it to a summary conclusion. Everything was flooded and much that was dear to the office staff of the Battalion orderly room went floating down the wadis. Until the end of October everything was directed to a definite object. The

Battalion knew a battle was planned and the part it would have to play in attacking a particular objective. The officers had the position very clearly described to them, there was a frequent study of aeroplane photographs of the enemy's line, and practice attacks made upon full-size models of the enemy's positions against which the 1/5th were soon to be pitted. All ranks were in fine spirits and looking forward to the fight. They were heartened by the sound of the very severe bombardment which was made by the artillery and the news that tanks were to assist in the advance. In a few days before "zero" day two tank officers were attached to headquarters and went up daily to the front line to observe the objectives. Then a few hours before the offensive was timed to start the tanks moved up along the seashore under cover of darkness to their jumping-off places, most of the Battalion turning out to see them pass.

6th The 1/6th Essex were on the left of the Brigade line on April 21st on the northern slope of Sheikh Abbas Ridge. The weather was hot. Two Turkish prisoners were brought in on the 23rd, whilst four British wounded crawled within the wire, having lain out since the battle of the 19th. A transport section of twelve Turks, with a dozen mules and two camels, who had wandered too close to the line, were captured on the 25th. One mounted man and two others escaped, whilst another Turk, shot in the leg, was chased into the line held by the 5th Bedfords. At the end of the month the Battalion was relieved by the 5th Suffolks and went into reserve in March at Regent's Park. From this place the Battalion had to send working parties every night to dig trenches for the 52nd Division. It was a tiring time, with a long march there and back and four hours' digging and wiring. The Scotsmen were very good, however, and always had a camouflaged fire burning, to give the men hot tea before they marched back at 2 a.m. The daily bathing parades soon cured the "septics." After a few days' rest the 1/6th took over from the Suffolks on May 6th, with hostile aircraft flying over them. It was at this time that Lieut.-Colonel Bowker left to take command of the 231st Brigade and he was succeeded by Major G. G. Ewer, 1/7th Essex. About 150 of the enemy raided North Post on Essex Hill at 1 a.m. on May 12th, but were driven off. The 1/6th suffered the loss of one killed and two slightly wounded. Turkish raiding was continued on the 15th, but again they were dispersed by the Stokes gun battery and shrapnel fire. The Battalion moved into reserve on May 18th at Wadi Levi and was there until the 25th, when it marched to Regent's Park. Two platoons and a Lewis gun detachment of the 5th Devons were attached for a short time for training in trench warfare, and then, on June 12th, the 1/6th took over Carnarvon Redoubt from the 6th Highland Light Infantry, with three companies in the front line and one in reserve. A draft of 184 other ranks joined and another of two officers and 94 other ranks on the 30th. The day before, however, the Battalion had



Entrenchments on Sheikh Abbas, May, 1917.



"Jimmie": A Gaza Souvenir.



Officers' Mess on Trek.



A Dug-out on the Beach.



Camel Transport of Wounded.

been relieved by the 1/4th Essex and went into Brigade reserve on Redoubt line at Kurd Hill. A reinforcement of 32 other ranks reported from England and on July 19th the Battalion relieved the 1/4th Northants at Wart Hill and Queen's Hill, with Battalion headquarters at Kurd Hill. The commanding officer, adjutant and most of the officers and N.C.O.'s went for training to the divisional school at St. James's Park on July 24th. The rest of the Battalion returned to Regent's Park on August 4th and thence on the 12th to St. James's Park for training, coming back on the 18th. "By this time," wrote an officer, "Balah and In Seirat had become huge depots in a perpetual cloud of dust. How different from the waving fields of barley we trampled down in March, I leave you to guess! At Rafah the country had changed suddenly from desert sand to green fields and now it was all dust again!" On August 25th the 1/6th marched to Sheikh Ajlin and took over the left sub-section of the Coastal Sector from the 2/10th Middlesex. The trenches were astride the track to Qantara, as traditionally used by the Saviour in His flight to Egypt. There was a good deal of raiding hereabouts, but casualties were not numerous, the most serious occurring on August 27th, when two men were killed by a shell and two others were wounded. The 1/7th took over from the 1/6th on September 10th. Two platoons of "C" Company were attached to the 1/7th reserve Company, but rejoined on the 19th. At the opening of October the Battalion was in reserve at Marine View and then went to Regent's Park and relieved the 4th Royal Scots. An officer who had been on leave found everybody on the verge of excitement. "The transport was brigaded and every night a convoy of baggage camels moved between Belah dumps and the front line. Reserve rations and water for seven days were placed behind the reserve trenches and camouflaged ammunition for all arms was dumped even in front of the wire by night. All was done slowly and quietly, but the work was tiring." A patrol of one platoon, a Lewis gun section and another platoon (less the Lewis gun section, in reserve) went out on the night of October 27th from Bacon's Boil to reconnoitre the ground in front of the line for the purpose of ascertaining a suitable halfway point for each company's section of attack in the forthcoming offensive and the places where the enemy patrols lay up, with the object of clearing the ground by artillery action before the attack, and to choose suitable positions for company deployment when the attack was launched. The party was fired on by the enemy and suffered three casualties. Sergeant Bate won the M.M. by the gallant rescue of a mortally wounded N.C.O. from the rear of the hostile position. Red and black flashes were issued to be worn on each shoulder of the tunic and sun helmets were withdrawn on October 27th and replaced by steel helmets and gas masks. Tanks arrived towards the end of the month and were concealed along the cliffs by the beach, whilst thousands of petrol cans were drawn from Balah by camels,

filled with water, and then taken to the trenches in readiness for the impending attack. The dugouts were flooded by a series of thunderstorms, which lasted three hours and spoil the month's record for fine weather. There were amusing scenes the next morning, especially for those who had to dig out their kits, for the rushing torrents poured into the dugouts and the walls collapsed. The sun soon dried everything, but many instruments were damaged, especially compasses. During the latter end of the month the Battalion practised attack singly and with the Brigade on a model of the enemy's trenches.

7th The 1/7th Essex took over the trenches occupied by the 2nd Battalion Imperial Camel Brigade, south-east of Sheikh Abbas, on April 22nd, with two companies in the front line and one each in support and reserve. This was altered with the opening of May to three companies in line and one in reserve. On May 6th the Battalion was relieved by the 12th (Fife and Forfar) Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers and furnished strong working parties until the 18th, when the 1/7th occupied Retrenchment Camp in place of the 12th Somersets—a system of seven strong posts in rear of Sheikh Abbas Ridge, with Abbas Redoubt on the right. The posts, one of which was renamed Warley Redoubt, were occupied day and night by trench groups, the remainder of the men being in wadis in the rear, with orders to man the posts in case of alarm. A company was in reserve in a wadi 400 yards south-west of Abbas Apex. On May 25th the Battalion was relieved by the 1/4th Northants and proceeded to Regent's Park, which was reached on May 26th, where Lieut.-Colonel Delamare assumed command of a group of the 161st Brigade, consisting of the 4th and 7th Essex and half the Machine Gun Company, Major R. A. Stubbings taking command of the Battalion. These troops relieved the 2nd Battalion Imperial Camel Corps at a series of posts situated on the left bank of the Wadi Ghazze. Two companies of the 7th were used to garrison posts and two were in reserve. The Battalion was transferred to Dorset House on June 9th and bivouacked in the Wadi Ghuzze, where Lieut.-Colonel Delamare resumed command, but only for a few days, as he left for 161st Brigade headquarters on June 13th, the same day that the Battalion succeeded the 5th Highland Light Infantry on Lees Hill. Major G. H. Wilmer, Essex Regiment, took over command there on June 27th, when the strength of the Battalion was 27 officers and 829 other ranks. The Battalion gave supporting fire to the troops carrying out a movement against Beach Post on July 15th and again on the 20th against Umbrella Hill, a day on which four were killed and one wounded by shelling. When Umbrella Hill was again the subject of attention on the 27th the Battalion area was also heavily shelled. During July the 1/7th Essex were so constantly employed in maintaining and improving the defences that it was not possible to carry out any training. On the 31st the men were re-armed with the short Lee-Enfield rifle. The strength

at the close of the month was 24 officers and 954 other ranks. During the night of August 3rd-4th the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Cheshires and withdrew to corps reserve at Regent's Park, from whence the 1/7th moved to bivouac at Marine View, with a good bill of health and a strength of 33 officers and 943 other ranks. On September 16th the 1/6th were succeeded in the Ajlin section of the Coastal Sector, with the companies disposed as follows: "D" Company, sea to Bacon's Boil inclusive; "C" Company, Bacon's Boil to Windy post inclusive, and "B" Company, Windy Post to Jones's Post, with "A" Company in reserve at Sheikh Ajlin. There was a severe bombardment by the Turks on September 30th and one officer of the 7th was nearly hit by a splinter from the burst of a 5.9 three hundred yards away. Men were wounded in "B" Company's headquarters and two men of "A" Company were literally blown to pieces in a communication trench. On October 3rd Lieut. Ridgewell, with a party of "C" Company, carried out a successful raid upon which all engaged were highly complimented. The objective was the Sugar Loaf and the platoon set about its task in a methodical manner. Stokes guns poured in a heavy fire to cover the advance and then the 18-pounders put a box barrage round it. Very little entrenchment was found and only one or two Turks were taken, all the raiders returning safely. The enemy retaliated with a covey of "pip squeaks." The Battalion left the line for Regent's Park on October 7th and from the 16th onwards practised on a sandbag replica of the Turkish front line. The concert on October 20th was a great success. The officers' sketch, "The General's Inspection," though practically unrehearsed, was much appreciated. The Battalion strength at the end of October was 37 officers and 953 other ranks.

M.G. The 161st Machine Gun Company shared the tedium of trench warfare with the Brigade, sections being attached to the Battalions as they went for their turn of duty in the front line. Hitherto the Company had been armed with Maxim guns, but on May 8th these were exchanged for Vickers weapons. When the enemy tried a raid on the 6th Essex in the early hours of May 12th, No. 1 Section opened a few bursts of fire with one gun, but all was quiet again within an hour. "Generally speaking," wrote an officer, "this part of the line was quite quiet. There was no rifle fire, as the opposing lines were too far apart, but the Turks shelled the rear of the escarpment pretty regularly with 5.9 howitzers, which were by far his most efficient and effective guns. During the night our artillery at varying times would send over a salvo of mixed shrapnel and H.E. in the hope of catching enemy working parties in the open. The Turks did not reply from fear of giving their positions away. On May 19th we had a very bad Khamseen—a hot, dry, stifling wind. On going out of the dugout into the wind it was almost like opening the door of a furnace. The heat all day was almost unbearable and was evidently also badly

felt by the Turks, as hardly a shell was fired by them." The Company went into rest at Regent's Park on May 26th and enjoyed the bathing. Nos. 1 and 3 Sections had sudden orders on May 28th to move to Abu Bakra, south of Tell el Jemmi, in support of the 7th Essex. When the men had got their guns into position on the new line which followed the left bank of the Wadi Ghazze, where there was a series of fairly steep hills, it was found that the enemy were miles away and the cavalry patrolled the front. Consequently the work was not arduous and a certain amount of time was devoted to training. Regent's Park was reached once again on June 10th. It became the practice for the machine guns in the line to be relieved a night or two after the infantry battalions, so that the whole of the troops were not being changed at the same time. Consequently, although the infantry relieved the 157th Brigade (52nd Division) in front of Outpost Hill, on the night of June 12th, the M.G. Company did not march up until the night of June 15th. Nos. 2, 3 and 4 Sections went into the line with the Brigade, No. 1 Section being in reserve, with Company headquarters behind Queen's Hill. From this point it was possible to fire indirectly on to parts of the Turkish rear lines in the hope of catching ration and working parties. On July 4th Captain R. Banks was killed. The Turkish artillery was active, particularly on the occasion of the raids on Umbrella Hill by the 5th Bedfords on July 20th and 27th. On the latter date No. 1 Section used indirect fire on to Outpost Hill and the Plantation, and No. 4 Section (Lieut. Harwood) was severely shelled by 5.9 guns whilst in position in the front line about Lees Hill. Early in August the M.G. Company was back at Regent's Park, when Captain W. H. Brooks took command of the unit upon Major Walker proceeding to England on leave. On the night of August 27th the Company relieved the 160th M.G. Company in the Coastal Sector. A portion of the new front line was being dug from Jones's Post called Yeomanry Trench and, with the enemy artillery apprehensive, the work was full of incident. During the night of September 3rd a hostile party appeared outside the wire and also on Bunker's Hill. The British artillery opened on them at 2 a.m. and within an hour the excitement had completely died away. The 7th Essex successfully raided a Turkish post at Sugar Loaf, outside Beach Post, two machine guns of No. 1 Section co-operating. The raiders had returned and the officers were sitting in their mess near Ajlin Apex when the Turks suddenly opened fire and quite a hundred "whizz bangs" came hurtling by. Fortunately everybody got to the ground in time and no damage was done. In collaboration with the artillery the machine gunners arranged a "strafe" of the Turkish defences. The 18-pounders did their best to smash up the Turkish front line during the day and the machine guns of No. 1 Section fired intermittently all night at the breaches in the sandbag breastwork in the hope that they might catch working

parties effecting repairs. It was, of course, impossible to tell what casualties were caused to the Turks. Upon relief by the 160th Company, the Company moved back to Regent's Park on October 9th, but was soon actively engaged upon the preparations for the third Battle of Gaza. The construction of emplacements for the machine gun barrage was commenced on October 16th. These were dug under the supervision of the M.G. officer concerned by working parties supplied by the infantry and the utmost secrecy was enjoined. After each night's digging the whole of the work had to be camouflaged before daylight with canvas supported on wire netting and wooden frames, so as not to be visible in air photographs. On one occasion a party, having finished the night's work, was forming up preparatory to marching off, when the officer in charge mentioned that the place seemed pretty well camouflaged. He had scarcely uttered this remark when he took a step back, there was a tearing sound and he fell into a hole about 8ft. deep which had been prepared to receive the framework of a dugout! The Company returned to Regent's Park on October 23rd for final training. Steel helmets were served out on October 27th, on the same day that the bombardment of the Turkish defences began. That night there was a thunderstorm, with vivid lightning, and the guns played all through it—quite a noisy time. By October 31st everything was in readiness.



THIRD BATTLE OF GAZA.

The third battle of Gaza was fought at the close of October and in the early days of November, 1917, and was part of a widespread operation which penetrated and then broke up the enemy defensive system from Gaza to Beersheba and formed the prelude to the victorious advance in Palestine and Syria in the final months of the war. Much had to be done, however, in the interval between the second and the last of the Gaza battles. Sir Archibald Murray pertinently quotes the tribute which was paid to his work by his successor, Field-Marshal Sir Edmund Allenby, G.C.B., who assumed command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force upon transfer from the Third Army in France, at the end of June, 1917: "I reaped the fruits of his (Sir Archibald Murray's) foresight and strategical imagination, which brought the waters of the Nile to the borders of Palestine, planned the skilful military operations by which the Turks were driven from strong positions in the desert over the frontier of Egypt and carried a standard gauge railway to the gates of Gaza." But much more had to be done ere victory was achieved. The cavalry and infantry were constituted into three corps—the Desert Mounted Corps (Lieut.-General Sir H. G. Chauvel), of three divisions, an independent mounted Brigade and the Imperial Camel Brigade, 745 officers and 17,935 other ranks; the XX Corps (Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode), of four infantry divisions, 1,435 officers and 44,171 other ranks, and the XXI Corps (Lieut.-General Sir Edwin S. Bulfin), of three divisions, 52nd, 54th and 75th Divisions, and a small composite force, 1,154 officers and 34,759 other ranks. The personnel, exclusive of artillery, engineers, etc., totalled just over 100,000 of all ranks, the 54th Division returning 340 officers and 11,147 N.C.O.'s and men. Reinforcement and reorganization were not the only requirements. "Qantara supplanted Alexandria as the principal base; quays for ocean steamers were built along the Suez Canal and immense depots of ordnance stores, supplies and remounts grew up there. The doubling of the military railway and of the 12-inch pipe line was accelerated. Large quantities of mechanical transport were assembled at Qantara to go up the line as soon as they could be utilized. In the immediate front a great deal of work was put in hand, especially in improving the forward communications and water supply and in preparation for heavy artillery reinforcements. Light railways, heavy telegraphs, wire roads, cleared tracks for Ford vans, water cisterns, surf boats—and much of the latest equipment of trench warfare, such as sound ranging, balloons, listening sets—all were utilized."

1. "An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914 to 1918," p. 39 (Manifold).

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The trench warfare was vigorous and conducted in the offensive spirit, giving rise to the impression among the Turks that Gaza was still the main objective. As late as October 24th the German liaison officer reported to Yilderim Army Group headquarters that whilst an outflanking attack was to be expected on Beersheba, yet the main effort would be, as before, against Gaza. The Turks and their German advisers along the immediate front were fully alive to the dangers of the situation, however. Constantinople, preoccupied with a great effort to recapture Baghdad, was implored to divert the troops so detailed to the Palestine front, which, if pierced, might result in a British advance to Aleppo and the consequent isolation of the Turkish armies operating in Mesopotamia. This appeal was not responded to until October, when von Falkenkayn was recalled from Mosul and four Turkish divisions were hurried into Palestine. The Turkish forces then comprised two infantry corps (nine divisions) and the 3rd Cavalry Division, a total of 50,000 rifles, 1,500 sabres and 300 guns. Up to the end of October the command was vested in Ahmed Jemal Pasha, G.O.C. Fourth Turkish Army, but at that date the forces were brought under the Yilderim Army Group, with von Falkenkayn in chief command, and von Kressenstein as G.O.C. Eighth Army, with headquarters at Huleikat, and Fezvi Pasha as G.O.C. Seventh Army, with headquarters at Hebron. "By July, 1917, Gaza had become a well-armed, equipped and garrisoned fortress. To prevent its envelopment, the Turks had constructed a chain of strongly entrenched localities extending almost to Beersheba along thirty miles of front. Besides the works immediately covering Beersheba, there were five other systems of redoubts: Qawuqa, Hurcira, Baha, Atawine, Sihan. These works supported each other, except on the extreme left of the Turks, where a gap of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles occurred between the Qawuqa and the Beersheba defences."¹ Von Falkenhayn had it in mind to offer a counter offensive, which, being based upon Gaza, would thrust the British Army to destruction into the desert, but that conception was quickly dropped, and he was soon fighting a losing battle in Palestine, with Jerusalem as the prize of the victor.

What had Sir Edmund Allenby in mind which was to prove such a sore discomfiture for the Turk and so decisive a factor in this world war? The weakest part of the Turkish defences, he decided, was that of Qawuqa and Irqaiyiq, where there was, as noted above, a gap of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles between the Hurcira system and that of Beersheba. His decision was that the main attack should be delivered against the defences of Sheria-Hureira, which would enable the British troops, if they overran them, to turn the Gaza position and open the ground for the large cavalry force to operate on the Turkish flank. As a preliminary it was essential to seize Beersheba by surprise—900ft. above sea level, but

1. "An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914 to 1918," p. 38 (Manifold).

dominated on three sides by hills—to obtain control of its excellent supply of water and to secure room in which to develop the principal attack. To encourage the Turkish belief that Gaza was still the principal objective, an attack upon that city was also decided upon. The greatest secrecy was employed. Troops were moved quietly from camp to camp. These were left all standing so as to deceive the air observers; a dummy main line station was constructed near the Balah-Gaza road at the Wadi Ghazze crossing, and Gaza was subjected to an eight days' intensive naval and land bombardment. The Cavalry Corps and the 74th and 60th Divisions, for whose supply even the transport of XXI Corps had been commandeered and who were served by 30,000 camels, surrounded Beersheba on the morning of October 30th, after a night march of eighteen miles across an arid and wadi-strewn plain. There was considerable fighting, in which much progress was made, but it was not until 6.30 p.m. that the town itself was entered by the 4th Australian Light Horse, who galloped over two lines of Turkish trenches and caused the enemy to hurriedly evacuate without demolishing the wells, although preparations had been made therefor. The operation was a complete success. To afford time for the remainder of the XXth Corps to assemble and deploy for the attack on the Sheria-Hureira defences, the Turks in and about Gaza were kept fully occupied by an offensive upon the line El Arish-Sheikh Hasan, a frontage of 6,000 yards. The aim was to penetrate to a depth of 3,000 yards. It was heavy going for the troops, the terrain consisting of sand dunes, which, in places, rose to a height of 150ft. This operation was in two stages. At 11 p.m. on November 1st the 52nd Division rushed Umbrella Hill, an outlying position, and then, after a preliminary bombardment which is said to have practically destroyed one-third of the personnel of a Turkish division, the second effort, delivered against the El Arish-Sea Post defences, started to time four hours later. This attack—in which the 52nd, 54th and 75th Divisions and the composite force were employed—was successful in reaching all objectives except a section of trenches on the left and a portion of the line in the centre. Whilst this fight was proceeding on the left, the British right was being pushed forward from Beersheba and the 10th and 53rd Divisions were menacing the enemy centre. The Turks resisted fiercely the advance of the 53rd Division and other troops in the neighbourhood of Khuweilfe on November 4th, but their attempt to throw the force back upon Beersheba was not successful, even though it persisted until November 6th. Upon that day the 10th, 60th and 74th Divisions stormed the Sheria lines, and the capture of the Hureira redoubt next day enabled the cavalry to pass through the gap. That night an assault upon Gaza was ordered, but before contact was established the Turk had withdrawn, only the Atawine works being still held by a rearguard. The enemy troops were in

retrograde movement all along the line. The way had been opened to Jerusalem.

The containing attack on Gaza was delivered by the 54th Division, to which was also attached the 156th Brigade of the 52nd Division. The objective was the enemy's trench system running from El Arish Redoubt to Sheikh Hasan on the sea coast. Umbrella Hill, an advanced post on a dune, with trenches connecting it with the main line, could bring flanking fire to bear on troops assaulting the El Arish redoubt, lying nearer the sea. It was accordingly resolved first to assault the redoubt on Umbrella Hill. At 11 p.m. on November 1st the 7th Cameronians, with a company of the 8th Cameronians, of the 156th Brigade, with great gallantry seized the position after half an hour's fierce fighting. This paved the way for the second and third phases, which opened at 3 a.m. on November 2nd. The intention was to seize the enemy trench system along a front of 5,000 yards and penetrate to a depth of 3,000 yards. This would cut off Gaza from the sea. The fourth phase was to consist of the assault of the 162nd Brigade upon Gun Hill and Sheikh Hasan, which was to take place when the 156th, 161st and 163rd Brigades had completed their tasks. In the words of Lord Allenby, the effort "succeeded in its primary object, which was to prevent any units being drawn from the Gaza defences to meet the threat to the Turkish left flank, and to draw into Gaza as large a proportion as possible of the available Turkish reserves. Further, the capture of Sheikh Hasan and the south-western defences constituted a very distinct threat to the whole of the Gaza position, which could be developed on any sign of a withdrawal on the part of the enemy. Our losses, though considerable, were not in any way disproportionate to the results obtained."

Having occupied Umbrella Hill, the 156th Brigade co-operated in the successful attack on El Arish redoubt with the 5th Suffolks, of the 163rd Brigade. The other battalions of the Brigade did not make so much progress. To the left of the latter was the 161st (Essex) Brigade, whose objective ran from Zowaiid trench, inclusive, to the sea. The difficulties of attack on this sector were not quite fully appreciated, because air maps did not completely reveal the enemy's defensive system. It was thought that from Umbrella and El Arish redoubt the enemy's line of resistance ran thence straight to the sea, with strong points at Zowaiid trench, Rafah Redoubt, Beach Post and Sea Post. In truth, however, the two latter were held as advanced posts. At Rafah Redoubt the Turkish main line took a right-angled turn and followed the contour of the coast by way of Rafah Balah to Sheikh Hasan. Thus it was that the right battalions of the Brigade ran up against a veritable hornets' nest about Rafah. If that position were taken, the whole of the system of coast defence in that quarter was in peril. The enemy were very apprehensive of a landing at Gaza, as in Gallipoli, hence their concentration upon the Rafah Balah trench

system, guarding Gaza from the sea. Sited upon a ridge, this trench gave them a clear field of fire and overlooked the beach at important points like Sheikh Ajlin and Sheikh Hasan. Sea Post and Beach Post were in reality advanced posts of the main line of defence.

The bombardment which preluded the assault has been thus described : " It was as if the furies had at last burst loose. For hours a tornado of high explosive and shrapnel poured on the Turkish positions, and standing on the sandy knoll on which our camp was placed, we could watch the storm of fire breaking beyond the summit of Samson Ridge. Though several miles away, we saw the sand crests in front of Gaza lit into distinctness as the brilliant flashes rent the darkness of the night." Under cover of this destructive bombardment, the troops moved, on November 2nd, to their positions. The task of the 161st Brigade comprised the second and third phases. In the second the 1/5th Essex, on the right, were to capture Zowaiid Trench and Rafah Redoubt, whilst on their left the 1/6th Essex were to take Beach Post and Sea Post, after which, as the third phase, the 1/7th Essex were to pass through and attack Cricket Redoubt, John-Yunis Trench Junction and the Rafah-Balah Trench. Two tanks were each to assist the 1/5th and 1/6th, and afterwards the four were to support the attack of the 1/7th Essex from a position north of Rafah Redoubt. The 1/4th Essex were in divisional reserve. The 161st Brigade staff, battalion commanders and adjutants were : Commander, Brigadier-General W. Marriott Dodington ; Brigade Major, Captain A. C. M. Paris, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry ; Staff Captain, Lieut. J. H. F. Bensford, 7th Essex. 1/4th Essex, Lieut.-Colonel B. C. Wells ; adjutant, Captain A. J. Beach. 1/5th Essex, Lieut.-Colonel T. Gibbons, D.S.O. ; Adjutant, Captain J. F. Finn. 1/6th Essex, Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Ewer, D.S.O. ; Adjutant, Lieut. H. H. Clark. 1/7th Essex, Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Wilmer, M.C. ; Adjutant, Captain F. J. Camm. 161st M.G. Company, Captain W. H. Brooks ; 161st L.T.M. Battery, Captain H. Miller.

The almost kaleidoscopic changes of the day's fighting are best revealed in the entries of the 54th Division's War Diary. At 12.31 a.m. on November 2nd the 156th Brigade reported all their objectives had been gained on Umbrella Hill and at 3.31 a.m. came news of the first success of the 161st Brigade, in the capture of Pebble Post, followed at 4.35 a.m. by the announcement that Sea Post was taken at 3.15 a.m. and Trench Robert at 3.50. Then at 5.15 a.m. the 163rd Brigade reported that the attack upon El Burj and Zowaiid had failed and troops were seen withdrawing, though the 1/5th Suffolks were in El Arish Redoubt and consolidating. A quarter of an hour later the 156th Brigade sent along word that part of their force was also in El Arish Redoubt. There was better news at 5.48 a.m., when Zowaiid Trench was stated to have been captured by the 161st Brigade. At 6 a.m. information was to hand that the 162nd Brigade had

moved forward and occupied William Trench and five minutes later it was known that they were in possession of Gun Hill and Henry Trench by 5.40. The important Rafah Redoubt was reported, at 6.20 a.m., to have fallen to the 161st Brigade, though Turkish machine guns were holding out between Zowaiid and Burj trenches. This prevented the junction of the 161st and 163rd Brigades, but communication had been effected between the 156th and 163rd Brigades on the right at Rook Trench, where the 1/4th Norfolks were holding Violet and Martha junction trench. At two minutes before 7 a.m. a sergeant bringing back prisoners reported that men of the 1/5th Norfolks had reached Gibraltar, though reduced in numbers, and at 6.45 the 161st Brigade definitely stated that they held Rafah Redoubt. Twenty minutes later Sheikh Hasan was stated to be clear of the enemy. At 7.15 a.m. a message was received that Cricket Redoubt was captured by the 161st Brigade, but the 162nd were held up at Balah by machine gun and rifle fire. Zion Trench was at 7.40 a.m. reported to have fallen to the 162nd Brigade, though the troops in possession had to retire to Sheikh Hasan before a strong Turkish counter-attack. At 9 a.m. the 161st Brigade sent word through that Trench Sydney, 150 yards east of Rafah Redoubt, was being consolidated. A company of the 7th Essex, at 9.3 a.m., were stated to be attacking John-Yunis trenches and twenty-two minutes later it was known that troops of the 161st Brigade were in touch at Zowaiid and Rafah Redoubt. John Trench, where the 1/7th Essex were engaged, was found to be only a scoop and divisional headquarters were informed at 10.7 a.m. that it could not be held owing to heavy machine gun-fire. The 162nd Brigade's attack on Balah was also notified as being unsuccessful. The 1/10th Londons had withdrawn from Fred Trench and were holding the junction of John-Yunis. At this time the divisional staff thus summed up the situation: "The foregoing reports indicate that the attack was successfully carried out and all objectives gained with the exception of the right loop of the third phase and the section John to Sheikh Hasan exclusive of the fourth phase. Regarding the right loop of the third phase, this situation is rendered difficult owing to isolated detachments of our men holding out in the vicinity of Crested Rock and making bombardment for further attack difficult." At noon the 161st Brigade reported that the enemy were maintaining harassing machine gun-fire on Rafah Redoubt and Zowaiid, whilst the same Brigade stated at 3 p.m. that the Turks were massing against Balah trench. Twenty minutes later there was better news in the capture of Tortoise Hill by the 162nd Brigade. At 3.50 p.m. there was a S.O.S. artillery signal from this Brigade and at 4.10 p.m. it was reported the position had been found untenable and a withdrawal had been effected to Sheikh Hasan. At 4 p.m. the 161st Brigade stated the enemy were counter-attacking Gun Hill in considerable force; also that the Turks were apparently in the eastern end of John trench.

The closing incident of the day was the issue of orders to the 1/4th Essex in divisional reserve to carry out an attack on Balah trench before dawn, whilst the 161st Brigade were to occupy the remaining portion of the Rafah-Yunis line in support of this enterprise. The effort was unsuccessful, though the 1/4th Essex occupied the trench for a time. Another attack upon the whole system was planned, but before it could be delivered the enemy had evacuated Gaza.

PART PLAYED BY THE 161st BRIGADE.

There was no hitch in the assembly for the second phase and the units of the 161st Brigade arrived to time. On the right the attack of the 1/5th Essex was carried out with great dash and gallantry by all ranks, though there was a mistake in identification of Zowaiid trench, the adverse effect of which was felt later in the day. It was an error easily made, for in the half light of morning the works were very much alike in appearance, "all were sited high and had low ground behind them." "A" Company (Captain Franklin) and "D" Company (Captain Deakin), the latter in command, were to attack the Rafah Redoubt, whilst "B" Company (Captain Frank Bacon), with two platoons of "C" Company, were to take Zowaiid Trench on the right. The remainder of "C" Company (Captain Colvin) was in reserve. By some error, which will remain unknown, for the officer deputed to check the direction was killed during the advance, "B" Company, which had inadvertently moved off from the forming-up place a minute earlier than "A" and "D" Companies, assaulted Rafah Redoubt instead of Zowaiid Trench, and took it. Captain Deakin, leading his companies to Rafah Redoubt, saw "a swarm of men clambering up the steep sandy slope which led up to the work" and came to the conclusion that he had lost direction and was making for the Beach Post, which was to be attacked by the 1/6th Essex. He accordingly moved to the right and after hard fighting, in which Captain Deakin was severely wounded, "A" and "D" Companies took Zowaiid Trench under the impression that it was Rafah Redoubt. The delay thus caused enabled the Turks to be reinforced and so when the men pressed forward to what they imagined was the rear of Rafah Redoubt, the leading platoons became involved in desperate fighting at Zowaiid Copse with a superior enemy force, as a result of which they withdrew to Zowaiid Trench. They suffered heavily, the casualties including three Lewis gun teams. This mistake in direction was held by the Brigadier to have been responsible for the failure of a party from battalion headquarters, who had followed "A" and "D" Companies, to establish a forward command in Rafah Junior, for that point was retained by the enemy, who shot 2nd Lieutenant Evans, in charge of the Forward Command Post, as he went towards it. The hold-up of this party delayed the establishment of communication with the Brigade forward station. Brigadier-General Dodington's final

conclusion upon this episode was penned some years later and it ran : "The mistake made by one and a half companies of the 1/5th Essex in taking the Rafah Redoubt instead of Zowaiid had little or nothing to do with the failure of the 1/7th Essex and the 1/10th Londons. This failure was due to two other causes, viz., (1) The complete breakdown of the tanks ; (2) The great strength of a work called Fred at the head of the Rafa trench. This Fred was a very strong work on a sandhill, which sloped abruptly on the northern (Turkish) side, giving absolute cover, except from howitzers. During the discussion of the artillery programme previous to the battle, the question was raised of maintaining the howitzer fire (and, I think, the sixty-pounders) on the Rafah trench and Fred, but it was found necessary to remove their fire for a period (I think ten minutes) to an area called Gibraltar (i.e., just north of the El Arish Redoubt) at a most critical time previous to the assault by the 1/7th Essex, followed by the 1/10th London. Two platoons of the last-named Regiment almost reached the work and were lying dead on both sides of the Rafah trench, having evidently attempted an assault and having been immediately destroyed as they came out of the Rafah Trench. Had this work (Fred) been captured and held at the first assault, it seems probable to me that the defence of the western flank of the Turkish system at Gaza would have collapsed." Such mistakes are the inevitable accompaniment of war and the 5th Battalion was deservedly proud that notwithstanding the confusion and delay which ensued by the right company swerving to the left, it captured both the Zowaiid and Rafah positions. Surely there could be no better testimony to its valour and discipline !

On the left the attacks of the 1/6th Essex upon Beach Post and Sea Post were carried out exactly according to programme. A party of the enemy were rushed on Sugar Loaf, where two officers and 16 men surrendered. The garrisons of Beach and Sea Posts fought hard, but the waves of assault followed the barrage closely and quickly ousted the Turks. The artillery barrage was particularly effective at Beach Post, for a number of the enemy were found dead in their firing positions. The two posts, with shallow, badly constructed trenches, were garrisoned by unexpectedly large numbers of Turks, of whom it was estimated that 50 were killed during the attack ; later 89 bodies were buried in this area. The Brigade forward station was established in Beach Post and communication with battle headquarters obtained within an hour of the offensive having started. "About 1.50 a.m.," wrote Captain R. O. H. Smith, "we moved through our own trenches. The distance from our lines to Beach Post was about 1,000 yards. Starting at 2.10 a.m. Beach Post was to be bombarded for five minutes, but there was no bombardment by our guns going on while we were getting into position. We moved off in four extended lines and were seen by an advanced post of the Turks, who were entrenched on the 'Sugar Loaf' (a small knoll of sand). These Turks rushed back and warned

the garrison of Beach Post that the British were coming. The Turks immediately stood to and started firing, but did not do much damage, as it all seemed to be too high. We could not rush the Post till our guns got in their five minutes' rapid fire. In a few seconds the row had started and the fact that the Turks were standing to before the artillery opened accounted for the slaughter which occurred and undoubtedly made the capture of the position very much more easy. As soon as the guns lengthened, 'C' Company rushed in, led by Lieuts. R. E. Cook and Clapton, and in a few moments the post was ours. 'C' Company behaved with great steadiness and were well up to the barrage. We had only one man killed in 'C' Company (Private Alcock), but several died later from wounds. Several of the Turks surrendered. Some started throwing bombs, but they were soon overthrown by weight of numbers." From Beach Post the 6th could see the advance of the 162nd Brigade from the shore, the Turks standing on the parapets of their trenches and bombing the men as they came up the sloping ground to take the position.

The subsequent attack of the 1/7th Essex was delivered upon two objectives. That on the right, Rafah Trench, was, as stated, not successful, for it started late and though it was pushed with great bravery, the men were unable to make much headway. The difficulty was enhanced by the discovery that Rafah Balah trench was enfiladed at close range by Junction Hill, which had been mistaken from the British lines for Yunis. There was also cross-fire from Fred, the importance of which had been previously under-estimated. The company on the left, deputed to capture Cricket Redoubt, suffered severely from trench mortar bombs when crossing No Man's Land. The company commander was killed, but this notwithstanding, Cricket Redoubt was entered and twenty Turks were killed or captured. It was the strongest and best constructed work in this part of the Turkish defences. Battalion headquarters, established near Pebble Post, were fired upon at close range by a machine gun, but the capture of this Post soon put an end to the menace. In the confusion of the fighting and the dislocation of communications, Lieut-Colonel Wilmer was in doubt as to which of the objectives had been taken. He, therefore, sent forward his reserve company to make certain of the capture of Cricket Redoubt, because of the need for clearing up this part of the line in readiness for the advance later of the 162nd Brigade. Upon arrival the company found that it was in our possession. The situation on the right was more obscure. An attempt was, therefore, made to move down John-Yunis trench from Cricket Redoubt, but this brought no result, as the trench was only about 2ft. deep and completely enfiladed by machine guns on the Rafah-Balah ridge. Movement from battalion headquarters at Pebble Post was very much restricted by machine gun fire from Island Wood and the Rafah-Belah ridge. Communication by means of Frank was slow, as it

was a mere scoop and runners took many hours to reach the companies on the right. It was not until nearly mid-day that the extent of their advance was ascertained and news obtained that the attack had been definitely held up, nearly all the officers having become casualties. Owing to the severe losses of the 1/7th Essex, it was decided to relieve the Battalion as soon as possible and the 1/6th Essex took over Cricket Redoubt in the afternoon. The 1/7th Essex were ordered to co-operate with the 1/4th Essex in an attack on the Rafah-Balah ridge before dawn on November 3rd, being allotted the task of capturing Junction Hill, but the effort was not pressed.

The work of the tanks was not uniformly successful. In moving to the forming up places No. 3 tank broke a track in rear of Bacon's Boil and thus took no part in the action. The movements of the two tanks with the right battalion were not clearly revealed to Brigade headquarters, possibly due to the misunderstanding as to which was Rafah Redoubt and which Zowaiid Trench. The sandbags on one of them—for they carried material for the Brigade—caught fire, but the tank was not damaged. Neither took any part in the subsequent phases and they were believed shortly after daylight to have returned to the Beach near Sheikh Ajlin. The remaining tank reached its objective in the first phase, but missed Cricket Redoubt, though it went on subsequently with the 162nd Brigade to Sheikh Hasan. The fire of the divisional artillery was both accurate and effective. A prodigious quantity of ammunition was expended, comprising over 50,892 rounds by 18-pounders, 10,799 by 4.5 howitzers and 2,332 by the 2.75in. mountain battery.

Brigadier-General Dodington thus commented upon the situation: "I am unable to mention any unit of the Brigade as having specially distinguished itself. The many and arduous calls made on all ranks were invariably met with the utmost cheerfulness. Perhaps the 1/7th Essex had the hardest time of any, taking their experiences with the original assault into consideration, but in an operation in which all did so well it would be invidious to draw any distinctions." After referring to the mistake in the identity of Rafah Redoubt and Zowaiid trench, the Brigadier went on to state: "The first information as to the progress of the attack was received from a man of 1/6th Essex, who arrived at brigade headquarters at 4 a.m. in charge of 18 prisoners (including two officers) captured on Sugar Loaf. Almost simultaneously information was received that the brigade forward station had been established in Beach Post. This was quickly followed by news of the capture of Robert and Sea Post. Messages from 1/5th and 1/7th Essex were slower in arriving, due, in the case of the 1/5th Essex, to the more intense shell and machine gun-fire to which their portion of No Man's Land was subjected, and in the case of the 1/7th Essex to the machine gun which remained in action near Pebble Post opening fire on battalion headquarters and knocking out a number of the

battalion signallers. With very few exceptions, the captured trenches were shallow and gave little protection to the somewhat heavy shelling to which the enemy subjected them during the day. The communication trenches were merely scoops, about 2ft. deep, and movement was much restricted. At night the Brigade was disposed as follows: 1/4th Essex, Divisional Reserve; 1/6th Essex, Beach Post, Cricket Redoubt and Sea Post; 1/5th Essex, Zowaiid Trench and Rafah Redoubt; 1/7th Essex, Rafah Trench, Frank and Arthur."

5th To take the deeds of the Essex Battalions upon that day in order. Upon the right were the 5th Essex, to whom previous reference has been made. They went into action with 25 officers and 925 other ranks. The War Diary simply states, under date November 2nd, "Attacked and captured Rafah Redoubt and Zowaiid Trench." Fortunately, however, details of that day's fighting are available, for Lieut.-Colonel T. Gibbons, D.S.O., who commanded the Battalion, has referred to it at length in his book upon the experiences of the 5th Essex. The warning that the long expected attack would take place in the early hours of the next day was given on the morning of November 1st, and at 3 p.m. the G.O.C. 54th Division (Major-General Hare) saw the officers and gave them final words of advice and encouragement. An hour later Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons satisfied himself that the battalion was in readiness and found the men quietly determined to carry the operation through. At 4.30 p.m. a short service was held and at 5 p.m. the Battalion had some hours' sleep. Then at 11 p.m. a hot meal was served, with a pint of beer. It was eaten to the roar of the enemy artillery, who had replied to the capture of Umbrella Hill with a heavy bombardment of that position and the front line, but fortunately they did not search the back areas. At 12.30 a.m. a move was made to the point of assembly and half an hour later the Turkish fire practically ceased, so that, when at 2.30 a.m. all was ready for the attack in front of the wire, "silence reigned supreme and we stood unscathed on ground which an hour before had been a veritable inferno." The tanks went in front and at 2.55 a.m. the companies deployed, receiving the protection of the barrage five minutes later. The moon disappeared and the light was very bad, so that with the smoke and dust caused by the gun-fire, reliance had to be placed upon the compass for direction. Battalion headquarters having been established for the time being in the front line, an advanced headquarters party, under 2nd Lieutenant Evans, followed "A" and "D" Companies for the purpose of establishing the headquarters in Rafah Junior Trench, an off-shoot of the Rafah Redoubt, as soon as the latter had been taken. "B" Company, it will be remembered, with two platoons of "C", was to take Zowaiid trench on the right. A telephone was laid as they went, but it was soon cut by the Turkish shell-fire and Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons had an added anxiety in that the buried line to Brigade headquarters refused

to work. After half an hour, however, a runner came back with the welcome intelligence that the enemy's front line was in our hands, notwithstanding the stubborn resistance of the Turks, who had in some instances been lying in the open in front of the trenches to avoid the bombardment and met the Essex men with the bayonet. From that time forward, however, until the close of the day, the commander of the 5th Essex was not free from anxiety. He knew that Lieut. Lancaster, who was responsible for checking the direction of the companies sent against Rafah Redoubt, had been killed and that Lieut. Evans, of the advanced headquarters party, had met a like fate. "The reports were very confusing, as both attacking parties claimed to be in the Rafah Redoubt. No word was received as to the Zowaiid Trench. Runners lost their way in the thick haze and it was impossible to tell exactly what the situation was. The air seemed filled with fine sand and smoke, which hung about like a thick ground fog and made it very difficult to see. Report came in from the right (which later proved incorrect) that the attacks on El Arish Redoubt and El Burj trench had been repulsed. I was very anxious about Zowaiid, which joined El Burj." News of the varying fortune of the battalions on the left also came through. As daylight strengthened, upon the report of a wounded man that he had seen some of the headquarters personnel in Rafah Junior, Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons determined to make his way there and, although hampered by persistent machine gun-fire, he reached the trench by way of Beach Post, which had been captured by the 6th Essex. Upon entering Rafah Redoubt the commander was able to clear up the perplexing situation as to whether Zowaiid Trench had been occupied as well as the Redoubt. Light was first thrown upon the mystery by seeing the leader of "B" Company being taken out of the Redoubt with a shattered foot, for he should have been in Zowaiid. Then it was revealed that Captain Deakin, leading "A" and "D" Companies, had seen men swarming into the Redoubt. It turned out later to be "B" Company. Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons thinks they lost direction because the compasses proved unreliable through the influence of the steel hats and rifles. However that may be, Captain Deakin rapidly made up his mind. "He quickly realized that whoever the attacking party were and whichever position it was, he was needed elsewhere. He told me afterwards that he thought, he, himself, might have lost his direction and that it was the 6th Essex storming the Beach Post in front of him. Acting on this supposition, he changed his direction and felt for the next mark on his right, which proved to be Zowaiid Trench. All the works were very much alike in that light. . . . Hence it is not surprising that I received, from Zowaiid, a sketch of Rafah, showing the parts of the trench which had been taken. It should be explained that officers of each party had been supplied with sketches of their objectives on which to make their reports. Deakin's presence of mind saved the situation, but the change

of direction had taken time, and the barrage had lifted some minutes before he arrived. The Turk was manning his parapets and it was only really good leadership and resolution that enabled the assaulting column to fight their way in." Captain Deakin went down with a broken leg and Lieut. Wray took command. Officers and men fell rapidly, but the companies fought splendidly. Sergeant Watsham, Corporal Jarrold and Private Long were particularly noted for gallantry, whilst Sergeant Cooper, D.C.M., fell when pluckily leading his platoon against the Turkish second line. The waves ordered to take this position succeeded in occupying it, but none got back, for the low ground was untenable because of the enfilade fire from the right. The front line trench was clung to with tenacity, in spite of the fierce enemy fire. Turks remaining therein were bombed out. Captain Bacon, with his company and a half, had kept well up to the barrage and entered Rafah Redoubt, despite the Turkish resistance, capturing two machine guns and a British Lewis gun which had been taken by the Turks in a former battle. Progress could not be made from the ridge to the low ground beyond, for, as in the case of Zowaiid, the whole terrain was enfiladed and untenable. The right half of the 7th Essex, too, passing by Rafah, were informed that it was Zowaiid, when, in fact, it was not, and this caused considerable delay, which had its adverse influence upon their important movement against Rafah-Balah trench. "B" Company, however, co-operated to the best of its ability by blocking the entrance from Balah and Lieut. Archer fought his Lewis gun there almost single-handed when Sergeant C. T. Alloway had been killed and most of the team knocked out. Although twice wounded, Archer subsequently helped to convey his company commander out of danger. C.S.M. Wilson was invaluable in assisting to organize and consolidate the position, and among the officers noted by Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons were Lieutenants Richmond and Lockwood. In both Rafah and Zowaiid the men suffered severely from shell-fire and to assist the latter in resisting a possible counter-attack, the remaining two platoons, under Captain Colvin, reinforced the diminishing garrison. So the day wore on, happily without counter-attack. Stragglers from units were organized into working parties and by their aid a new trench was dug on the northern slope, the dead were buried and the trenches cleared of debris. There was a furious enemy bombardment at dawn, Zowaiid being particularly troubled by a minenwerfer that could not be identified. During the day Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons, who had been wounded in the hands, handed over command to Captain Franklin. Captain Colvin took the latter's place at Zowaiid. At midnight on November 3rd Major Wilson assumed command of the Battalion. The casualties in the action were two officers killed, six wounded; 73 other ranks killed, 172 wounded and nine missing, a total of 262. The killed included Sergeants H. Byles, N. Bruce, D. Ambrose, Corporal P. Anderson and Lance-Corporals H. Quilter

and Tasker, efficient and trustworthy non-commissioned officers. Colonel Gibbons relates many incidents of conspicuously gallant conduct. Captain Wray, after seeing his men firmly established in Zowaiid, went back to Captain Deakin, and, although wounded himself, carried the former under heavy fire to a place of safety, made a report of the situation to headquarters, then returned to Zowaiid and consolidated his position, refusing to have his wound attended to. "In any other war he would have got the V.C., for which he was recommended by the Brigadier and the Divisional Commander. Instead he received an immediate D.S.O." Captain Deakin subsequently crawled 600 yards to the dressing station. Captain Finn was described as an ideal Adjutant, "cool and business-like as usual; no amount of fire could upset his equanimity." Private F. Long, finding some of the men becoming a little "loose" and inclined to take shelter, rushed forward and stood on the parapet of Zowaiid, cheering on his comrades. Although hit in the thigh, he then carried Captain Deakin back some distance until, weak from loss of blood through his wound, he had to leave him in a shell hole. Corporal Jarrold played a prominent part in clearing the enemy position and on one occasion, to deal with a minenwerfer, he took his Lewis gun in the open and silenced it, his own gun being subsequently disabled by machine gun-fire. Sergeant Harold Watsham took charge of the first wave of his company when his officer fell wounded and then bombed and cleared a communication trench. He started upon another, but was wounded in several places. Private Harold Andrews took command when his section leader was killed and cleared the portion of trench allotted to them, whilst later in the day he brought in seven wounded men lying in the open, three of them under direct fire. Sergeant G. J. Kemp, when a group posted at a block in a trench was rushed by the enemy, who were covered by artillery, instantly organized a counter-attack and recovered the position. Private J. Clayton bombed several enemy dug-outs before receiving a severe wound in the leg, whilst Privates Charles Broyd and F. J. Harrington did brave work as stretcher-bearers.

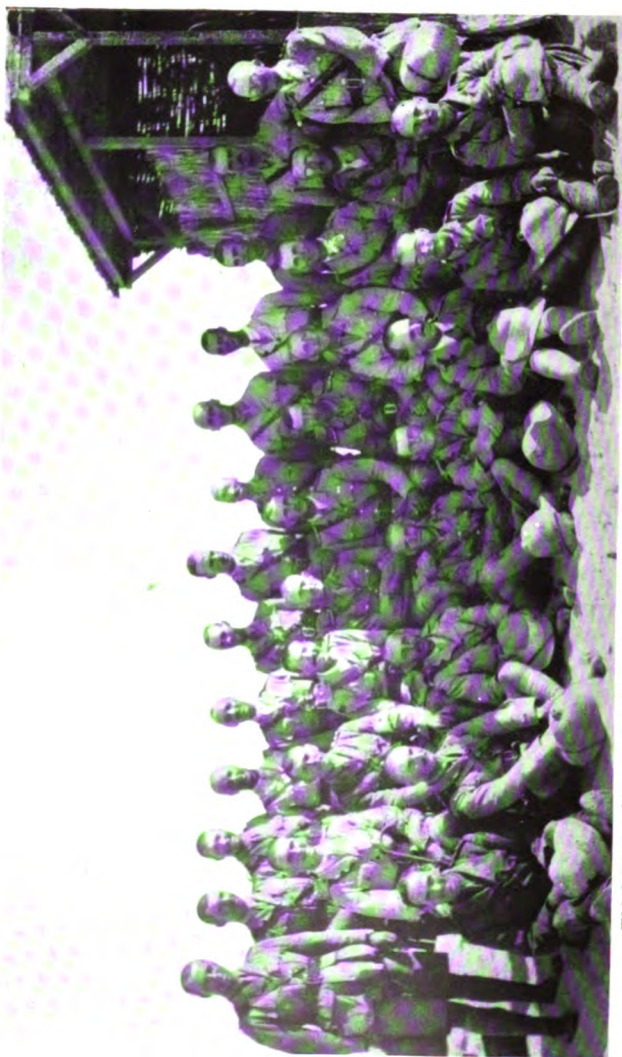
6th The 1/6th Essex had a hot meal at 11.30 p.m. and at midnight they moved off via the Beach and Sheikh Ajlin garden to the assembly position in the vicinity of Bacon's Boil, where the Battalion was distributed as follows: One platoon, "B" Company (2nd Lieut. Armstrong), 50 yards east of Bacon's Boil; "C" Company (Captain R. O'H. Smith), 50 yards west of Bacon's Boil; "D" Company (Captain D. H. Rose), 400 yards west of Bacon's Boil. The Battalion reserve, "B" Company, three platoons (Captain A. D. Clark), was in rear of "C" Company and the Brigade reserve, "A" Company (Lieut. C. W. Silverwood), was immediately in rear of "B" Company. Two tanks were in "D" Company's area, one to assist in the capture of Sea Post and the other of Beach Post. A detachment of 161st Machine Gun Company was with "A" Company and a section of 161st

Brigade Trench Mortar Battery with "B" Company. "D" Company was allotted Sea Post, 700 yards away, as its objective, having the support of a portion of a battery of 18-pounders and No. 6 Tank. "C" Company was to take Beach Post, at a distance of 600 yards, aided by a section of 4.5 howitzers and a battery of 18-pounders and No. 5 Tank. No. 1 Platoon of "B" Company was attached to "C" Company for the purpose of taking Pebble Post and had the support of a section of 18-pounders and of a tank after it had passed through Beach Post. All trenches leading from the captured positions were to be barricaded at least fifty yards from the Posts. The O.C. "C" Company was responsible for getting into touch with the 1/5th Essex at Rafah Redoubt. After occupation of the two Posts, "B" Company, in reserve, were to take Robert Trench and then occupy George Trench, afterwards communicating with the 1/7th Essex at Cricket Redoubt. The assaulting companies were instructed: "Every endeavour will be made to push beyond the limits of the objectives provided the tactical situation is thereby improved. In any case patrols will be used boldly within the limits of the protective barrage. Touch with the enemy must be maintained at all costs and patrols will take advantage of the thinning and cessation of the protective barrage to obtain it, if necessary." A contact aeroplane was to fly over the line from Umbrella Hill to Rafah Trench at 5.45 a.m. and an hour later from Rafah Trench to Sheikh Hasan; flares were to be lit on the farthest objective when called upon by Klaxon horn. During the assault a temporary regimental aid post was established at Bacon's Boil and, later, when the Posts had been captured, at Beach Post. Whilst the Battalion was deploying a hostile listening post was driven back and at 3 a.m. the attack commenced. Battalion headquarters moved with "B" Company, proceeding to Beach Post when it was captured at 3.30 a.m. The advance of "C" Company upon Beach Post was most successful, the enemy resistance being quickly overcome. Fifty Turks were killed and twenty taken prisoners, including three officers. A Lewis gun which had been lost by "A" Company in March previously was retaken, together with 50,000 rounds of Mark VI British S.A.A. and a quantity of bombs, gas masks, etc. The Company commander (Captain R. O'H. Smith) said everyone did well. They included Lieuts. R. E. Cook, Clapton and Withers, the last-named being very unwell, but refusing to give up his command. Sergeant-Major Flarry, an old Essex regular, set a splendid example. Private George, though severely wounded, stuck to his post until ordered back. Privates Mathers and Lodge showed great pluck and enterprise in carrying messages under fire, whilst another notable figure was Sergeant Bateman, who had been decorated for bringing in a wounded man while out on patrol a few days before the attack. At 3.15 a.m. "D" Company had entered Sea Post and by 4 a.m. had cleared the enemy therefrom,

with a loss of two killed and nine wounded, the Turks having two officers and 33 other ranks killed and one officer and 27 other ranks taken prisoner. When the Company arrived at Sea Post, those Turks who had survived the bombardment made a determined resistance. Among the number was an officer, who was recognized by a platoon commander as a Turkish chaplain. This man had a rifle in hand and had assumed a very threatening attitude. The platoon commander, however, did not wish to grapple with a non-combatant, so he seized his rifle and attempted to brush the man aside. As the rifle was nearly red hot and the Turk resisted strongly, the platoon commander had no other alternative but to shoot him. It is pleasant to be able to record that the Turk bore no malice and expressed his gratitude for the treatment of his wound before being taken to the dressing station. It was never known whether he survived his hurt, but all "D" Company sincerely hoped that he would. According to programme, "B" Company occupied "Robert," Beach Post communicating trench, at 3.50 a.m., seizing also a machine gun, and followed up by taking "George," the communicating trench of Sea Post and Cricket Redoubt. The tank allotted for Beach Post offensive was not of much assistance, for it stuck fast at Sugar Loaf and then, again, near Beach Post. The Sea Post tank, however, rendered effective service. "B" Company took over Cricket Redoubt at 7.30 a.m. from 1/7th Essex and was almost immediately reinforced by the platoon which had been attached to "C" Company. Thus, within four hours and a half and exactly according to time table, the 6th Essex had overrun the portion of the Turkish line allotted as their objective. They found the captured trenches were mere scrapings in the sand, the walls being maintained by old doors, cushions, torn sandbags and any old material taken from the houses in Gaza. At 8.45 a.m. "A" Company were ordered to reinforce 1/5th Essex at Rafah Redoubt, but were held up by crossed machine gun-fire, and returned to Sugar Loaf at dusk. During the day Battalion headquarters were removed to Sea Post and at 2 p.m. the regimental aid post was established there, enemy shell-fire falling throughout the day. Sugar Loaf was a small sand hill situated about two-thirds of the way from the front line to the enemy wire and some eight to ten feet higher than the surrounding terrain. It became rather a joke in the Battalion before the attack that if it were not for Sugar Loaf, no attack could take place, for behind this small natural shelter were to be situated the reserve company of the Brigade, a first aid station, an ammunition dump, water, engineer's materials and rations. There was insufficient room for more than the Company signallers and some of the Company H.Q. in the rear of Sugar Loaf. The rest dug scoops in the soft sand as close to the hill as was possible and lay waiting for the call for reinforcements, which might have come from any part of the Brigade front. At about 8.45 in the morning after the night assault, the Company received a call for assistance from the

1/5th Essex in Rafah. This call was promptly responded to, but after one platoon had left shelter and had got across to the 5th, the enemy sprayed machine gun-fire across each end of Sugar Loaf as soon as any movement was observed. Two more sections sustained considerable loss in getting over. Other sections were waiting for a lessening of Turkish activity, when a runner came back supporting a wounded comrade, and reported that the 1/5th Essex were all right and that, anyhow, there was not room for any more men in their trenches. This was duly reported to Brigade. Later the Turk started shelling the post and as he was getting direct hits on the sand hill, which then seemed remarkably small, and also on the scoops to the rear of the cover, permission was sought, and obtained, to move to the Beach and join Battalion headquarters. It should be mentioned that at this time it was thought that all positions had been gained by the assaulting troops and that no immediate counter attack was imminent. Consolidation of the position occupied the whole of November 3rd and then on the following day the 1/7th Essex were relieved at Cricket Redoubt, Arthur Trench, and a new line partially dug therefrom. "D" Company was in the right half and "B" Company in the left half, with Battalion headquarters in Arthur Trench. In this position the 1/6th Essex stayed until they were relieved by the 1/7th Essex on the night of November 5th-6th. During this period "C" Company remained in Beach Post and, though continually shelled, hardly a man was hit, owing to the lack of detonation in the soft sand. Half a dozen men, however, sustained shellshock.

7th The 1/7th Essex—which had, on November 1st, an effective strength of 35 officers and 953 other ranks—had to participate in the third phase of the operation. They had to follow up the 1/5th and 1/6th Essex, and when these battalions had done their work, to carry on and take Cricket Redoubt, John-Yunis Trench Junction and Rafah Trench. The objectives were allotted as follow: "D" Company (2nd Lieut. W. C. Cooper), Rafa Trench; forming up place, immediately N.E. of Rafah Redoubt. "C" Company (Captain G. Jones), John-Yunis Trench Junction; forming up place, N.E. of Pebble Post. "B" Company (Captain K. F. Wilson), with a platoon of "A" Company attached, Arthur Trench, Cricket Redoubt; forming up place, N.E. of Beach Post. "A" Company, three platoons (2nd Lieut. C. L. Ashurst in Battalion reserve. The Battalion had been specially trained over a full-sized model of the objective built at Marine View. The 1/7th Essex left bivouac at Regent's Park and at zero hour were in readiness 200 yards N. and N.N.E. of Windy Trench—"D" Company on the right, "C" in the centre and "B" on the left—in lines of platoons at 100 yards intervals, with the reserve Company ("A") 100 yards in rear of "B" Company. The advance to the forming up places was to be undertaken at varying times—"D" Company, Zero plus 16; "C" Company, Zero plus 20; "B" Company, Zero plus 26, and "A" Company,



Third Battle of Gaza : Group of Officers of 17th Essex. Lieut.-Col. H. G. Wilmer in command.

Zero plus 28—but there were confidential instructions that should the enemy's barrage come down the Companies were to move forward at once on their respective bearings. "D" and "C" Companies advanced at the times appointed without casualty, although troubled by minenwerfer fire, but "B" and "A" Companies were shelled about Zero plus 26 and had several casualties, including 2nd Lieut. R. H. Cleverly wounded. The approach march to the enemy's front wire (Beach Post-Rafah Redoubt) was effected with great difficulty owing to the smoke, for it was impossible to see more than 50 yards and the sole means of keeping direction was by compass. In addition, the noise of the supporting barrage rendered the communication of orders very difficult. The right Company ("D") reached the jumping off place, N.E. of Rafah Redoubt, but was informed by the garrison then in occupation (the reason for the misunderstanding is given in the record of the 1/5th Essex) that it was Zowaid Trench, with the result that the commander wheeled his company westward to reach, as he thought, to his proper position. In doing so, however, he recognized Rafah Junior and this enabled him to verify his position. To save time, however, he moved N.W. of Rafah Redoubt to form up and suffered some casualties from rifle grenades or bombs. 2nd Lieut. C. W. Haydon was wounded and about ten other ranks were killed and wounded. A detachment, under 2nd Lieut. R. V. Hosking, was left as reinforcement for Rafah Redoubt. The assault upon Rafah Trench was delivered late in consequence of the previous delay, but it was occupied without opposition and a junction was effected with "C" Company, who were on the northern portion of Rafah Trench and unable to make further progress. "C" Company, in the centre, reached the enemy's wire about 100 yards east of Pebble Post without incident. Battalion headquarters then left the Company for Pebble Post, but on approaching that point they were fired upon at short range by a machine gun there which had not been "mopped up" and casualties were caused. The gun was rushed by a party under Corporal Seagar and the gunner fled. Meanwhile, "C" Company had reached the forming up place immediately west of Rafah Redoubt. In moving forward they struck Rafah Trench and penetrated to Switch Trench. One platoon (2nd Lieut. S. C. Ridgwell) then turned westward through the enemy's wire in order to assault John-Yunis Junction, but met with heavy machine gun-fire from "Fred" and also encountered enemy bombers, so that no further progress could be made. Heavy casualties were suffered, including the platoon commander missing. The survivors rejoined the Company in Rafah Trench. Communication was then established with "D" Company. "B" Company, on the left, with a platoon of "A" Company (2nd Lieut. S. S. Seecombe), were at the wire east of Beach Post to time, but then came under severe machine gun-fire from the N.E., which caused about twenty casualties, but this

notwithstanding the Company formed up on its correct alignment. Then came another burst of fire, which killed both the company commander (Captain K. F. Wilson) and 2nd Lieut. C. G. Taylor. The move forward had just commenced. The attached platoon took Arthur Trench and then "B" Company, under 2nd Lieut. P. H. Turner, seized Cricket Redoubt and John-Yunis Junction, nearly 100 prisoners being taken. The opposition was slight, but the Turks had to be bombed out of their dugouts. As no information had been received from "B" Company, Lieut.-Colonel Wilmer, an hour and twenty minutes after the Battalion had been in motion, ordered "A" Company to push forward to Cricket Redoubt and clear up the situation. Although the company commander was wounded, he continued to lead his Company and they quickly ascertained that "B" Company had successfully attained its objective. They went along John Trench and captured several Turks, but owing to machine gun-fire they were unable to remain in John Trench and withdrew to the vicinity of John George Trench Junction. Representations were made by the commanders that the two machine guns and two Stokes guns in Beach Post should move forward to Rafah Trench, but as all the ground between "Frank" and Rafah Trench was swept by the enemy machine guns, it was not found possible to proceed via Rafah Redoubt or John Trench. The machine guns remained in "Frank" and covered the ground on the western side of Rafah Trench. Thus at daybreak the 1/7th Essex were disposed as follows: "D" Company in the southern portion of Rafah Trench, with a small party under 2nd Lieut. R. V. Hosking in Rafah Redoubt; "C" Company in the northern portion of Rafah Trench, in close touch with the enemy and under machine gun-fire from "Fred"; "B" Company in Cricket Redoubt; "A" Company had three platoons in George Trench Junction and one platoon in "Frank." Battalion headquarters were in "Frank," near Pebble Post.

Throughout the day there was fighting in the northern portion of Rafah Trench and periods of severe shelling, machine gun-fire and sniping over the whole area. At about 4.50 a.m. two companies of the 10th Londons advanced towards John-Yunis Trench from the south-west, but, unable to make progress, they dug in on the western side of Rafah Trench. Communication between that point and Battalion headquarters was impossible, except by runners, the majority of whom did not get through owing to the machine gun fire, which swept all the intervening ground. Some of the messages took three hours to deliver. At 6 a.m. a barrage was placed on John-Yunis Junction at the request of "C" Company, but Battalion headquarters could get little information subsequently of the situation in Rafah Yunis trench, beyond that which could be observed from Pebble Post. About mid-day Captain G. Jones, commanding the Company, was killed and then at 3.30 p.m. a party of the 10th Londons relieved "C" Company in the most northerly part

of Rafah Trench. Further action had been restricted by the scarcity of hand grenades and small arms ammunition. After dark there was much activity and consolidation of the Brook Hill-Rafah Redoubt line was commenced. "A" Company was moved from John-George Trench Junction to Brook Hill, with orders to work to the S.E. towards Rafah Redoubt. "B" Company was transferred from Cricket Redoubt to a line from Rafah Redoubt on the right running N.N.W. towards Brook Hill. The gap between the two companies was covered by the two machine guns in Frank Trench. The line having been established, "D" and "C" Companies were withdrawn from Rafah Trench, the former to John-George Junction and the latter to "Frank," where 2nd Lieut. H. W. Hall assumed command. Battalion headquarters were in Arthur Trench.

Recording his impressions of that day of continual fighting, Captain Turner wrote : "Zero hour on this occasion was an event to remember for the rest of our lives. The synchronization of watches had been carried out perfectly. A few seconds to three everything was as peaceful and quiet as a Devonshire lane on a summer evening. At 3 a.m. to the tick the whole earth seemed to open. I managed to look behind me before the smoke from bursting shells became too dense and the back areas seemed to be lit up continuously by the intense artillery fire of our guns. The Turkish reply was feeble at first, but grew in intensity as time went on. As troops began to move he seemed to swing his guns round to meet them. We had the help of a creeping barrage, which came down in front of us at 3.26 a.m., our time for departure to Sea Post, which had been taken earlier by the 6th Battalion. No sooner had we got on the move than we were caught by a salvo of "whizz-bangs." Three out of the first four shells found their mark in Nos. 5, 6 and 8 platoons. Lieut. Cleverly was severely wounded and Lieut. Taylor killed, whilst the casualties amongst the N.C.O.'s and men of these platoons were heavy. Following this first salvo, we doubled on to a gap supposed to have been cut in the Turkish wire. This gap was not, however, nearly wide enough, with the result that only one man could get through at a time and then he had to be careful of many loose strands of wire which had been left hanging there. This caused considerable delay in passing through the Turkish front line to our second jumping off place for our attack on Cricket Trench and Cricket Redoubt. A very brave and skilful Turkish machine gunner had moved his gun out into the open and laid deadly aim on this gap, with the result that there were many more casualties among "B" Company as they passed through the wire. On assembling on the farther side of Sea Post in readiness to attack Cricket Redoubt, I was informed that Captain K. F. Wilson, the company commander, had been killed. Thus 'B' Company were reduced to one officer and approximately 80 other ranks. After some slight delay we located 'A' Company's bombing platoon under

the command of Lieut. S. S. Seccombe. They proceeded to clear Cricket Trench and after reporting 'All clear,' we attacked Cricket Post and Cricket Redoubt, covered by heavy artillery and machine gun fire. The opposition from both of the posts was not strong owing principally to the heavy artillery and machine gun fire which had been sustained since the opening of the attack. The majority of Turks either came out and gave themselves up or retired to the bottom of their dug-outs. In the latter case Corporal Draper, M.M., very successfully dealt with them with his bombing section. The Turks found in the trenches were only too pleased to give themselves up and only one or two could show much fight. Altogether we collected some 80 odd prisoners, including a medical officer and, I fancy, the officer in command of Cricket defences. The medical officer, who, on meeting me, thought I intended putting him out right away, fell on his knees in the trench and offered me a huge wad of Turkish notes if I would spare him. I scorned the money because no Egyptian or Army canteen would give a 'Thank you' for Turkish money, but persuaded him that his rather exquisitely embossed sword might get in the way on his journey to the prisoner-of-war camp. It was intended to adorn my hall in after years, but unfortunately there were more efficient scroungers in the Regiment than myself and some kind person 'won it.' Our prisoners were duly dispatched to their rest camps till the end of the war. Most of them were thoroughly glad to have the chance of being captured without the necessity of being branded as deserters. Their clothing, equipment, boots and general appearance were terrible. Their state was not the result of immediate privation, but reflected the awful conditions these men must have been living under for months."

The 1/7th Essex were ordered on the morning of November 3rd to make another effort to occupy John-Yunis Junction and Rafah Trench, in conjunction with the attack by the 1/4th Essex on Balah Trench. "A" Company, at Brook Hill, were to assault John-Yunis Trench Junction, whilst "B" Company, in the south-western portion of Rafah Trench, were to reoccupy the whole of that work. "D" Company were to follow in support of "A" Company from John-George Junction and, after assisting in the effort against John-Yunis Trench Junction, to connect the two leading companies. The assault was delivered shortly after 4 a.m., under cover of a barrage, but fire from machine guns and minenwerfer was severe. This did not stop "A" and "D" Companies, who worked up close to the enemy's wire, which they found uncut. With the enemy fire increasing in intensity, they were forced to withdraw once more to Brook Hill, which was reached about 5 a.m. Troops on the left were observed to be withdrawing about 5.45 a.m. and the two companies went back to John-George Junction and Cricket Redoubt. "B" Company had, meanwhile, reoccupied Rafah Trench and established a block 160 yards north of Rafah

Redoubt. The severity of the Turkish machine gun fire caused a withdrawal later to the southern end of Rafah Trench. Two platoons were left in the newly-dug trenches south-west of Rafah Trench. Enemy activity was maintained during the day, rendering movement difficult, but at night there was further reorganization—"A" Company reoccupied Brook Hill; "B" Company established a strong point at the southern end of Rafah Trench and dug communications to the new line, Rafah Redoubt-Brook Hill. "D" Company worked on a communication trench via John Trench to Brook Hill. "We spent the morning of 3rd November," recalled the commanding officer of "B" Company, "and the rest of the day consolidating our position in Cricket Redoubt. All communication trenches were successfully barricaded and the positions made as secure against counter-attack as possible. 'A' Company, under Lieut. Ashurst, had been already placed in reserve at the far end of Cricket Trench. Ashurst had been wounded again in the wrist. He seemed to delight in having his wrist watch pushed into his wrist by a bullet. His wrist must have been full of several makes of watches. At stand-to on the night of the 3rd the Commanding Officer (Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Wilmer, D.S.O., M.C.) came up to Cricket Redoubt and informed me that I was to proceed with 'B' Company to Rafah Redoubt and there consolidate a strong post. Also I was to dig a trench line from Rafah Redoubt towards Cricket Redoubt. Lieut. Seccombe, with 'A' Company, was to dig from Cricket Redoubt towards me. We proceeded to our appointed line and dug all through the night, but with a very much depleted company we were unable to do much more than dig ourselves in. The Company was reduced by then to one officer and approximately 50 other ranks. We did not join up with 'A' Company, but the gap was not too large and the two trenches served to straighten out the salient between Cricket Redoubt and Rafah Redoubt. The new line was photographed by the R.F.C. and duly recorded on the later maps of the defences, being named Turner's Trench, after myself. The Turks, on finding newly dug trenches, proceeded to dust them with artillery. This they did most accurately. Our own artillery registered a protective curtain for us, as we then had no wire in front of us. The Turks' first salvos blew up all our telephone lines, with the result that we were completely cut off from the rest of the world. We were forced to remain out of sight and lie very low during the day in Turner's Trench, but we managed to consolidate the strong post at Rafah Redoubt."

Lieut. R. V. Hosking, of the 1/7th Essex, contributes his personal impressions of the fighting. His story is of great interest, for he was guide to "D" Company: We (the 1/7th Essex) were in bivouac at Regent's Park on the morning of November 1st, 1917, when a message was received that the anticipated attack on Gaza would be made on 2-1 day. The morning was then spent inspecting every detail of equipment, iron-rations,

ammunition, etc. At 5 p.m. we turned in to snatch some sleep and at about 10.30 p.m. we had a hot meal. Companies fell in about midnight and assembled on the beach, where we had a last smoke. Soon afterwards the Battalion marched up to Sheikh Ajlin, where companies separated to go to their positions of assembly as previously arranged. The plan of attack was for 1/6th Essex and 1/5th Essex to take the first line system of Turkish trenches and the 1/7th Essex to pass through and take the second system. "A" and "B" Companies' objective was Cricket Redoubt and "C" and "D" Companies' objective the Rafah Balah Trench. Artillery formation, diamond pattern, was the method of attack to be adopted by "D" Company, as Rafah Balah Trench ran at right-angles to the front line. My platoon, being the leading platoon, was to run along either side of the trench from where it left the 1/5th Essex position and bomb the first 50 yards or so and then get in. The other platoons were to carry on in the same way so that the Company would occupy about 200 yards. "C" Company were to attack the northern section of the trench and effect junction with "D" Company. "D" Company were in position just south of Ajlin Apex, ready for the attack, by 2.45 a.m., 2nd November, and at 3 a.m., the zero hour, we moved forward, crossed Windy Trench and when outside our wire, shook out into artillery formation. According to plan two tanks were to precede the 1/5th Essex in their assault and then carry on beyond to assist the 1/7th Essex. We passed one of the tanks just by our wire—it had broken down. On moving forward the platoons had difficulty in keeping touch with each other owing to the dense smoke caused by the heavy bombardment which was going on. As I was to be responsible for the direction of the Company I had two or three nights previously gone across this strip of "No Man's Land," taking note of various features of the ground to be traversed. This knowledge was now useless, as the smoke was as dense as a London fog, and it was, therefore, necessary to go entirely by compass. When about three quarters of the distance had been covered the smoke cleared a little and on taking another compass bearing I saw something flaring directly in the line of march. To our great disappointment and subsequent misfortune this proved to be the second tank allotted to clear our objective; it had apparently received a direct hit and was blazing furiously. We reached the enemy's wire well on to time and at the arranged place, which was just east of Rafah Redoubt, but had to hack a lane through the wire, as the artillery had hardly touched it at this spot. This caused the Company to bunch up rather closely and at this moment bombs were thrown in our midst from the direction of Sydney Trench, causing several casualties and a certain amount of confusion. 2nd Lieut. C. W. Haydon and C.S.M. Ilott were among those wounded here. Lieut. W. C. Cooper, who was in command of the Company, was informed in all good faith by men of the 1/5th Essex who were in occupation

of that section of Rafah Redoubt that they were in Zowaid Trench. The rear of the Company then began working westward along Rafah Redoubt, followed by the rest of the Company. It was not long before we realized that a mistake had been made, but the Company had become very scattered in the maze of Rafah Redoubt. Fortunately, Cooper, who was now a long way ahead, reached our objective with the majority of the Company, but by the time I had worked round with the remainder Rafah Trench was overcrowded, as "C" Company could not proceed down the trench as far as was intended and the 10th London Regiment, who were held up by terrific machine gun-fire, were getting into it, so we had to remain in the Redoubt near the end of the trench. Two signallers in my party effected telephonic connection with "G" Company, but were unable to get into touch with Battalion headquarters, as the cable was continually cut by shell-fire. "C" Company were having a terrible time, as the trench they were in was straight and shallow and they were being continually bombed and machine-gunned from a strongly fortified sap lower down. Captain Jones rang me up as soon as the 'phone was connected and begged for any bombs or ammunition that I could get. Poor Jones was killed just after sending this message. The whole morning was spent by my party collecting ammunition from the dead and wounded and carrying it to "C" Company, several men being hit getting down the shallow trench. Colonel Gibbons, the C.O. of the 1/5th Essex, made his headquarters in the Redoubt early in the afternoon and thereafter my party acted upon his instructions. In the evening we were employed in trench digging and at about 3 a.m., whilst digging a trench across the end of Rafah Trench, I received instructions to collect all men of the 7th I could find and report to Cricket Redoubt. On going down Rafah Trench I was surprised to find the garrison had been already withdrawn and the only response to a call I made lower down was a shout in Turkish, followed by some rifle firing. We reported at Cricket Redoubt about 4.30 a.m. on November 3rd and found the Battalion already forming up in preparation for an attack. Immediately afterwards we advanced in extended order to assault the northern portion of Rafah Trench. A heavy barrage was brought down on the objective and lifted about the time the enemy's wire was reached. Despite all efforts, I don't think anyone succeeded in getting through the wire. Several enemy machine guns were mounted on the parapet and these played deadly havoc in our ranks. 2nd Lieut. C. S. Taylor, of "D" Company, was killed here. Seeing that continuing the struggle to get through the wire meant annihilation, the officer in command gave the order to withdraw and we withdrew to Cricket Redoubt. Small parties of men arrived back at various times during the day, but when all were mustered the Battalion seemed hardly larger than a strong company. That night "A" and "D" Companies dug a trench opposite and as near as possible to Rafah Trench. Digging

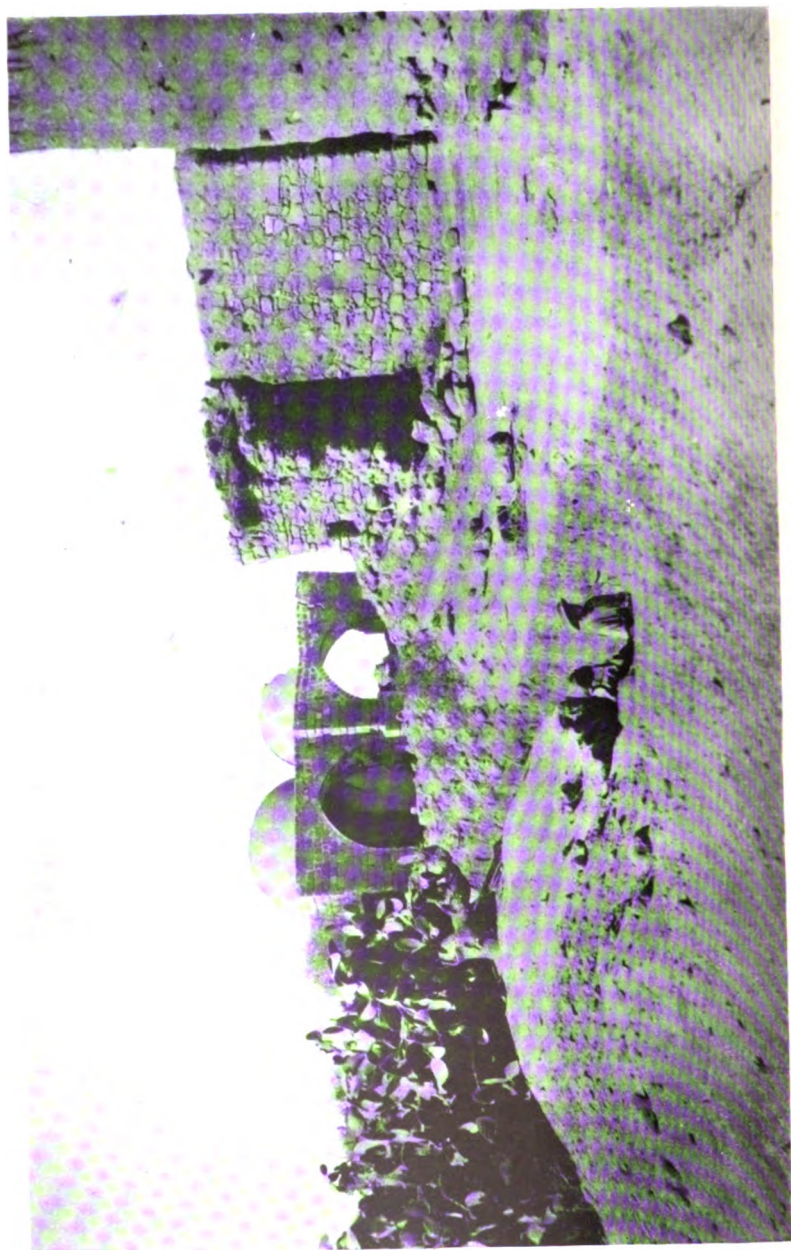
in the sand was exasperating work, as we had no sandbags and the sides of the trench kept falling in, making it impossible to get down to a protective depth. About midnight Cooper and I were forming up a party for wiring when the moon arose, revealing us to the Turks, who immediately fired a burst from a machine gun, killing four and wounding three of the party. Privates Pryke and Foster, who were among the best Lewis gunners in "D" Company, were, unhappily, two of the four. Just before dawn we received orders to return to Cricket Redoubt, as it was realized that the new trench would be untenable in daylight. That day (November 4th) everyone suffered severely from thirst, as we had received no water since early the previous day. The heat in those shallow Turkish trenches was most trying and to make things more unpleasant the position was heavily shelled during the afternoon. Night time again found us digging, this time a communication trench from the Redoubt out to the trench dug the previous night. Minenwerfers disturbed our digging, but with the exception of making a most terrific din, they did not do much damage. Some water arrived next morning and worked out to about half a pint per man. The sun playing on the fanatis in which the water was carried had made it almost hot, but, nevertheless, I never enjoyed a drink more. In the evening the Battalion moved to Sea Post and next morning we had a glorious wash in the sea, the first for nearly five days. Padre Johnson, who always had a happy knack of turning up at the right moment, arrived and produced a safety razor and soap. I think nearly every man in "D" Company used that razor and they needed it, too. In the afternoon the Padre held a service, which was attended by every man in the Battalion. What a sadly depleted gathering to the splendid parade service held at Regent's Park during the previous week!

On the night of November 4th-5th the Battalion was relieved by the 1/6th Essex and concentrated about Sea Post, with "D" Company as the garrison of the strong point there. On the evening of the 6th the Battalion was again in the line in relief of the 1/6th Essex, posted as follows: "D" Company, Cricket Redoubt; "C" Company, Beach Post and Arthur Trench; "B" Company, right of Brook Hill-Rafah Redoubt line; "A" Company, left of Brook Hill-Rafah Redoubt line. When Captain Mumford took over at Beach Post he found "C" Company practically officerless and for a time it had been run by C.Q.M.S. Davy. The men were very exhausted. When day dawned on November 7th it was discovered that the enemy had withdrawn. The Battalion moved back to Sea Post, where all ranks bathed and rested and then marched to Anchor Inn behind Gaza and bivouacked. On their way they passed Rafah Balah, where they found the Londons and Essex lying thickly and buried Captain Jones, of "C" Company, in the trench. Gaza, with hardly a house standing, was seen at close quarters for the first time at sunrise on November 8th. The Battalion dug in at Anchor

Inn, but received sudden orders to move in the afternoon as reserve to an outpost line. They passed Gaza and went about three miles north of the town, where they arrived after dark and slept in the open. The casualties throughout the battle were heavy, totalling 281. Six officers were killed—Captain Gerald Jones, M.C., Captain K. F. Wilson, Lieut. W. R. Barrett, 2nd Lieut. G. T. Taylor, 2nd Lieut. C. S. Taylor and 2nd Lieut. S. C. Ridgwell. Six were wounded. Sixty-one other ranks were killed, 81 were missing and 177 were wounded.

The last days of the battle are thus described by Captain Turner : " On the third day after the commencement of the fighting we were informed that we were to be relieved by the 1/6th Essex, who had been in Brigade reserve since the first attack. This news cheered us immensely, as we were all suffering from lack of sleep and the strain was beginning to tell on all ranks. Preparations were made and we were duly relieved by 'D' Company, 6th Essex during the night. I am afraid the company commander had a surprise, because he arrived with a very strong company and was somewhat upset to find that he could not accommodate more than one of his platoons in the trench which we were holding and which had been dug by a very depleted company. At any rate, all ended well and he left half his company in a gully to the rear of the old front line. A pleasing little incident occurred when we were on our way to Battalion headquarters. Noticing a Lewis gunner in the dark struggling with all kinds of impedimenta (military and otherwise), I questioned him as to why he was so burdened. Besides a Lewis gun, which is no light weight, and other spare parts, he was humping a full bottle of rum (S.R.D.). I asked why he had brought it from the line when we could obtain a further supply at Battalion headquarters. His reply was that it was 'not right losing good stuff when once you've got hold of it.' I asked him why he had not left it for the 6th Battalion (the relieving party). His reply to that was, 'Not jolly likely. Too many of them. None of 'em would get a decent drink.' When we arrived at Battalion headquarters, which was then established at Sea Post, we were met by the C.Q.M.S. with rations and a further supply of S.R.D. Five minutes later we were all rolled up and fast asleep with about five blankets per man. This rest was all too short, for inside half-an-hour I was awakened and told to occupy the trench line in front of Sea Post. However, we were allowed to finish our well-earned rest and 'D' Company were sent to occupy this piece of line. The following morning, all things being quiet, we indulged in a much-needed bathe and continued the rest of the day in lazing and bathing. In the evening the commanding officer informed me that I was to return with 'B' Company to Turner's Trench the following night. I, therefore, spent the remainder of the evening and a great part of the night in reconnoitring No Man's Land to find the best way back without disturbing too many people. We commenced our return journey at 10 o'clock

the following night and after many and varied adventures in No Man's Land we arrived in our former position. This was still in the hands of the 6th Battalion. After having taken over from them we settled down to quite a peaceful night, disturbed only by a machine gun and a few Verey lights now and again. We 'strafed' one working party who were a little too exposed and allowed themselves to be seen against the sky line with almost a full moon shining. The following morning we turned our attention to the improvement of our trench and wiring. We were not allowed to progress very far with this work before the Turk started registering on our trenches and Rafah Redoubt. He ranged guns of every calibre singly and then in salvos. We were treated to 'whiz-bangs,' 4.2's, 5.9's and shrapnel. This continued for best part of the morning. At lunch time they ceased fire and we were able to repair our telephone wires, which had all been blown up, cutting us completely off from Battalion headquarters. The damage repaired, I talked to the commanding officer and asked for some counter artillery work and also for a barrage to be registered in front of us. We could not quite fathom the intentions of the Turk. In the afternoon, however, they started in real earnest and turned on every gun they could find—'Crumps,' shrapnel, and 'whiz-bangs.' They plastered Rafah Trench, Rafah Redoubt, Rafah Post and Turner's Trench. This went on the whole afternoon with more or less serious results to 'B' Company. A 5.9 burst in the strong post occupied by the Lewis gun team, bombers and company headquarters, causing many casualties. From the determination of the enemy gunners, it was very evident that they were after their minenwerfer, which they had had to leave behind. They were situated about 30 yards in front of Rafah Redoubt. Had they been fortunate enough to have obtained a direct hit, it is very doubtful if any of 'B' Company would have escaped alive. The minenwerfer pits contained several guns and hundreds of shells all ranged along the back of the pits. A direct hit would have sent the whole lot sky high and 'B' Company, 7th Essex, together with a company of the 5th, who were just behind us, would have been no more. The Turk continued his shelling until late in the evening, but without attaining his objective. We suffered pretty severely from the onslaught, but managed to settle down by nightfall. Darkness passed peacefully enough. Hardly a shot or a Verey light was fired. This pointed to something out of the ordinary and stand-to came in the morning with feelings of excitement as to what was going to happen next. What had occurred in the night was that the Turk had bolted and cleared completely out of Gaza. A marvellously organized move, seeing that he had taken his heavy guns, which had been firing until late the previous evening. Everyone was much relieved, as can be imagined. It was possible to walk about the parapet without fear of being 'shot up.' This was a great joy and the first time it had been possible for many a long



Tomb of Sheikh Ajul, near Gaza.

day. For some time we wandered around, searching out our own casualties and making arrangements for their burial. Afterwards I visited the minenwerfer pits and discovered what a near shave we had had. The officer-in-charge and several gunners had evidently been killed the first day of the show, as they were either in the gun pits or their dug-outs. Whilst returning from the minenwerfer pits I met Colonel John Brown, commanding the Northhamptons, and his Adjutant, who were making a round to find their dead. Colonel Brown, on that morning, was almost a broken man, as he came upon one after the other of his men who had passed to their last rest. He could hardly speak when he asked me how we had fared during the previous few days. We returned midst the quiet to Sea Post, where we remained for the rest of the day. At night we were moved up to Anchor Inn at the far side of Gaza, where we did outpost duty for the night. Many members of the Battalion tried to have a look at Gaza, the town we had gazed at from various angles for months, but most of the roads approaching the centre of the town were strewn with live shells which the Turk had cast in his flight. Wires were left all over the roads and one did not know when one might kick the nose cap of a live shell or detonate a land mine. We saw as much of the town as we thought necessary under the circumstances."

THE ATTACK ON RAFAH BALAH.

4th The 1/4th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel Barrington Wells) were in bivouac in Regent's Park on November 1st. At night they moved to the beach and took up position in Sugar Valley, the Battalion being in divisional reserve. Ten other ranks were wounded from shell-fire on November 2nd. The 1/4th were then temporarily attached to the 162nd Brigade to participate in the attack on Balah Ridge on November 3rd. The battalions of this Brigade had captured Gun Hill and Sheikh Hasan, but in their wedge-shaped position were suffering enfilade fire from the network of trenches, which lay some three or four hundred yards from the coast. The offensive started from Gun Hill and was covered by a heavy artillery barrage, which opened at 4 a.m. When it lifted half an hour later the trench was rushed. The Battalion scarce had time to settle down, when at 5 a.m. large Turkish reinforcements heavily counter-attacked and the Battalion was forced to withdraw to Gun Hill, where it joined the 1/11th Londons, who had been lying in support. The casualties were considerable—eleven officers (four of whom were killed, including Captain J. F. H. Beddow and 2nd Lieut. S. G. Y. Saunders) and 280 other ranks, a total of 291. The Battalion had been asked to do a task to which subsequently a full Brigade was assigned, though the withdrawal of the enemy from Gaza caused that operation to be cancelled. The 1/4th also had the unusual experience of advancing in face of the barrage instead of moving under cover of it. The artillery fired into Balah Trench

from the land side and the Battalion came in from the shore. Such a tactical movement required the most precise adjustment and it was not surprising that some loss was occasioned to the personnel thereby, for the artillery fire did not always exactly synchronize with the infantry advance and casualties ensued.

To deal with the work of the 1/4th Essex in detail, the Battalion moved off in column of route along the beach to Gun Hill carrying Lewis gun buckets, petrol cans (containing water), picks, shovels, two hand grenades per man, with haversacks on backs in place of packs, and arrived just after midnight. The beach was dead ground and few casualties were suffered, these latter being caused when the men were on the shore line. The Gun Hill trenches, near the crest of the ridge, were held by the 10th-11th Londons and upon arrival there the Battalion waited for a time. The dusty climb up the ridge was covered by the artillery bombardment, which had been falling upon Balah trench for some three or four hours. About 12.30 the Battalion were led over the ridge and across the short space of open ground by way of the forward trench position on Gun Hill to the enemy's lateral wire, which ran from Gun Hill over the sand near Tortoise Hill to the northern end of Rafah Balah. There they took up position for the attack with the whole Battalion in line. "A" Company (Captain Beddow) and "B" Company (Captain Carhart) were on the right of the wire and "C" Company (Captain Bittles) and "D" Company (Lieut. Bishop) on the left. Battalion headquarters remained on Gun Hill. Captain Beddow was in command on the right and Captain Bittles on the left. The wire constituted the direction mark. The artillery barrage was a reverse vertical creeping fire from north to south of the enemy position. It was also ordered that during the attack the Bedfords should demonstrate towards Turtle Hill on the north. Machine guns and the 1/5th Essex Lewis guns were to give supporting flank fire from Rafah Redoubt. In extended order the 1/4th Essex moved forward to Rafah Balah, the objective being marked by the falling shell-fire. The men were within fifty yards of it at 4.30 a.m., according to time table, and then, when the barrage lifted, with a rush with the bayonet, they were in the trench. A few Turks were seen, but large numbers were lying about killed by shell-fire. Parties of considerable strength were also found in the dug-outs, which were bombed. "A" Company was on the extreme south next to Rafah Redoubt, with "B" and "C" Companies in the centre and "D" Company at the northern end. Consolidation was immediately proceeded with and the Lewis guns, which had been brought up by the mule teams moving in extended order, were placed in position commanding the communication trenches. On the left the trench was so packed with men and material that there was hardly room to move. Yet the bombers in this quarter did most effective work against the retreating Turks, particularly Sergeant Merrington. Captain Bittles, who wanted to get into touch with "D" Company,

had the greatest difficulty in reaching there because of the congestion. Dawn was at hand and there was need for celerity of movement, as the Battalion had orders to extend still further to the left, where, according to the map, there was a trench by means of which Sheikh Hasan could be reached. Unfortunately, there was no trench. It was simply a scoop in the sand a foot deep; a trench had been dug there at some time, but it had silted up from disuse. This shallow excavation, which was covered by enemy machine guns and also by minenwerfer fire from Turtle Hill, quickly came to an end and there was no communication with Sheikh Hasan. To that unfortunate circumstance was probably due the subsequent set-back in an operation which until that moment had been attended with complete success. From this direction came the counter attack. The artillery support ceased upon the occupation of the trench and this enabled the Turks, who had massed in Island Wood-Belgravia, to launch powerful counter-attacks, in which the strength of a division was employed, the main effort being against the left flank. In this quarter the enemy pressure was so severe, particularly by means of bombing, that the remains of "D" Company were forced out of the trench into the open, though the Lewis gunners kept up a persistent rattle. The unsubdued enemy fire from Turtle Hill had a great deal of influence in securing this evacuation. A demonstration had been ordered against the Hill by another unit, but it was not pressed. This withdrawal exposed the centre companies to a heavy enfilade. "About a hundred yards off in the strengthening daylight," wrote Captain Bittles, "we saw literally thousands of Turks working away against us. I had never seen so many before." The same thing was happening on the right, where "A" Company, forced out of the trench, sought what cover they could in the dead ground in front of Cricket Redoubt. The effect of enemy pressure was to force the flanks back, so that the centre companies on either side of the wire were in grave risk of isolation and had to withdraw to escape destruction. The behaviour of the men was most gallant and determined, for as they got out of the trenches they lay down in extended order and fired upon the advancing Turks. The fire of the latter from the newly recovered position became more and more severe and fight as they would, the 1/4th could not resist the pressure and the survivors were pushed back to their starting point. "We felt very keenly," wrote an officer, "having to retire after we had secured the trench so handsomely, but we had some consolation later when we were congratulated upon having taken the position and informed that in the circumstances a brigade could not have held it." When the troops advanced over the same ground a day or two later some of the Essex dead were lying where they had been wounded, their pipes in their mouths as if they had sought what comfort they could from a smoke as they lay dying. One member of the Battalion was

found to be still alive in a secluded part of the forward trench on the Rafah Balah ridge. He was unable to move on account of his wounds and he had lived four days through the heavy shell-fire of the British artillery without being found by the Turks. It was a remarkable feat of endurance, but unfortunately the man died later from the effect of wounds and exposure.

The Battalion retired in small parties across Gun Hill to the beach below. During the morning (November 4th) it was withdrawn to its original position at Sugar Valley and there settled down, being reinforced by the nucleus ordered up from Deir el Balah. On November 5th the G.O.C. XXI Corps, with the G.O.C. 54th Division and Brigadier 162nd Brigade, made an inspection of the position at Gun Hill and Sheikh Hasan, and afterwards had a consultation with the O.C. 4th Essex in order to obtain first hand information concerning the strength of the position on Rafah-Balah ridge and to relieve those battalions of the 162nd Brigade which were wedged in at Gun Hill and Sheikh Hasan.

An officer who fought with the 4th Essex went carefully over the Rafah-Balah trench system when Gaza fell and his impression was that if the Corps artillery had maintained concentrated fire instead of ceasing its support upon the capture of the front line trench by the 4th Essex and paid particular attention to Yunis trench, Fred trench and Island Wood, and the cactus round Belgravia, it would have assisted the 1/4th Essex to force their way forward along the support trenches and secure at least the two first-named. This would have given them a good field of fire and ample room for movement, whilst permitting the redoubt behind them to be held by the Battalion in support. As it happened, the front line trench was so overcrowded when captured that there was no room for the sections to work. Unsubdued Turtle Hill, on the flank, was also a grave menace.

ENTRY INTO GAZA.

A second assault was ordered upon Gaza for the night of November 6th-7th, when Middlesex Hill, on the right, was to be taken at 11.30 p.m., and Turtle Hill, on the left, at 5 a.m. Among the works to be over-run was Rafah-Balah trench, upon which was concentrated a brigade composed of the 11th Londons, 5th Bedfords, 1/6th and 1/5th Essex (right), the last-named having only two companies, "C" and "D" (Colvin and Franklin), in the line. "A" Company (Lieut. Gadsden), of the 1/4th Essex, was attached to the 1/5th Bedfords for fatigue duty. The assault was timed for 1 a.m., but when the troops marched to the point of assembly report was rife that the enemy were evacuating Gaza. As an instance of the definite information that was to hand, Captain P. W. Scott, with Sergeant Merrington ("C" Company), had entered Rafah Balah earlier in the night searching for 1/4th Essex dead, and found unmistakable signs of withdrawal. It was felt desirable to make assurance doubly sure and at 12.45 a.m. the bombardment started, but no reply was received. The

attacking force went on and occupied the objective without the accompaniment of the racket of machine gun and rifle fire and the heavier note of artillery. The enemy had withdrawn. Word was immediately sent to the rear and the bombardment was stopped. Patrols were then sent forward in the early mist of morning to obtain touch with the enemy. They penetrated to the outskirts of the city and "D" Company, of the 1/6th Essex, claim to be the first to have entered Gaza. Captain Rose, commanding that Company, finding the enemy trenches empty, sent a message to the Battalion commander (Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Ewer), "We are at Anchor Inn," a hut standing on a track leading into Gaza from the north-east. The order came back that Rose was to take his company to the Turkish hospital in Gaza and hold it, "B" Company following in support. "D" Company accordingly marched straight into the middle of the town and occupied it. From the flat roof of the hospital they signalled the brigadier (General Dodington) that Gaza was being deserted by the enemy. Patrols were then ordered to proceed to the top of Ali el Muntar. This was done and it was there that the men of "D" Company met the 75th Division, who were moving forward to enter the city. This Division had occupied the Ali el Muntar positions at 7.40 a.m. By 7 a.m. the 54th Division had established a line from Sheikh Redwan to the sea, from which cavalry patrols pushed their way to Wadi el Hesi. Upon their way the 1/6th Essex saw the Royal Scots on the top of Umbrella Hill, from which point they had not yet advanced. Captain Rose's recollection is that upon his entry into Gaza, which was almost directly after daybreak, there were no other British troops either in the town or its close proximity. Thus it is that the War Diary of the Battalion has the entry, "The 1/6th Essex were the first to enter Gaza." The pressure of the advance of the British right from Beersheba, with the danger of being cut off in the salient, which was forming round Gaza, was the cause of the Turkish withdrawal, which was complete. When the occupation of the city was effected, the 52nd Division, advancing along the beach, at 10 a.m. seized the high ground on the right bank of the Wadi el Hesi, notwithstanding the obstinate rearguard fighting of the 53rd (Turkish) Division. The 52nd Division thus came upon the flank of the British line, which had been previously held by the 54th. Away on the right the troops were opening still wider the gap about Qawuqa and enabling cavalry to pass through.

The fallen city was found to be "in a deplorable condition. Its civilian population had been evacuated and the greater part of the woodwork of the houses—floors, roofs, doors and fittings, window sashes and shutters—removed to be used either for the revetting of Turkish trenches in the sandy soil or for firewood. Many trees had been cut down and immense damage effected by the explosion of the Turkish ammunition stored in prominent buildings and detonated by British gun-fire. The place was,

in consequence, entirely ruinous and destitute of any economic value to the victor. On the other hand, General Allenby was not called upon to make arrangements for the feeding of a large civilian population." An Essex officer, who was one of the earliest among the ruins, when riding through it a day or two later was also struck by the damage done by the British bombardment. Passing on to Ali el Muntar and the neighbourhood of Green Hill, he was impressed by the very difficult nature of the task expected of the 161st Brigade at the first battle of Gaza owing to the command of the plain which the Turks had from Ali el Muntar and other positions. Traces of the presence of British troops still remained. Several helmets were found, some of which had the men's names in them and one or two paybooks, as a result of which Captain Colvin, of the 1/5th Essex, later took a burial party to the battlefield and interred several fallen comrades.

THE MACHINE GUN COMPANY.

The work of the 161st Machine Gun Company (Captain W. H. Brooks) in the Third Battle of Gaza was divided into two categories viz., barrage, with mobile guns moving forward in support of the infantry for purposes of consolidation. For the former purpose 14 guns of the Company were employed—ten from the 161st Company and one section of four guns attached from the 155th Machine Gun Company. Four groups—W, X, Y, Z, the last-named near the shore—were dug, with emplacements and dug-outs, each connected by telephone with Machine Gun Company headquarters. The group commanders were: W group, Lieut. Butterly; X group, Lieut. Harwood; Y group, section, 155th M.G. Company; Z group, Lieut. Needell. Each group, with the exception of X group, was of four guns, with two officers and 27 other ranks.

The officer commanding Z Barrage Group describes the work of his group as typical of all the barrage guns. He writes: The preparations for the machine gun barrage began about the 16th October and the building of the emplacements and dug-outs for the groups has been already referred to in detail. For the first two hours of the attack I had been allotted three targets: (1) A portion of the Rafah-Balah Ridge a little south of Yunis Trench, including the junction of the trench from Cricket Redoubt, from zero to zero plus 56 minutes; (2) the vicinity of Gun Hill from zero plus 60 minutes to zero plus 95 minutes, and (3) Angle Trench (about 700 yards north-east of Rafah Redoubt), from zero plus 95 minutes to zero plus 120 minutes. The position allotted to my group was quite close to the sea and some little distance behind the front line on the reverse slope of a slight rise. The firing, therefore, had to be "indirect," i.e., the targets could not be seen from the gun positions. Since the war machine gunners have been issued with much better instruments for "indirect" fire, but at Gaza our instruments were rather primitive. Direction was obtained from the map by compass and as fire had

to be kept up over the heads of our own troops it was necessary to determine the contours of the ground between the guns and the target. The maps available, however, were not sufficiently detailed or accurate for this purpose, so it was necessary to find the levels of the intervening ground and the targets by means of an "angle of sight" instrument. This took a great deal of time and it was further complicated by the fact that we could not see any of our targets from our front line. My group consisted of four gun emplacements each provided with shrapnel-proof head cover, a dug-out 6ft. square for belt filling and a dug-out for group headquarters and signal office. A shallow trench joined the emplacements and the two dug-outs. Prior to zero day, four spare belts, two new spare barrels and 10 gallons of spare water for each gun, with plenty of oil and 60,000 rounds of ammunition, were taken up and stored in the group. In addition to this ammunition, 3,500 rounds per gun, ready filled into belts, would be brought up when the guns came up. I was, however, very anxious lest the guns should fire off the ammunition more quickly than the belts could be re-filled. Consequently, I arranged to have three belt-filling machines working and all the spare men continuously filling belts by hand as soon as they were emptied by the guns. By this means it was found possible to keep pace with the expenditure of ammunition. In case of casualties occurring, every N.C.O. and man in the group had been fully instructed in the gun elevations, etc., required. On the evening of the 31st October, i.e., two days before the battle, we moved up to the group with all our gun equipment. This allowed us a day to see that everything was finally ready. We were, however, not allowed to fire the guns from the group prior to zero. Zero hour was fixed for 3 a.m. on the 2nd November—four hours after the attack on Umbrella Hill had started. By 2.30 a.m. we were all ready to open fire, the lights in the night firing boxes were lit and every man at his post. All our watches were finally synchronized again with Brigade headquarters and the telephone lines again tested. Slowly the minutes passed. Shortly before 3 a.m. the firing which had been going on heavily on our right since 11 p.m., when Umbrella Hill was taken, died away and at a few minutes to three all was absolutely quiet. From my position on the reverse slope of a slight rise I had a good view rearwards and it was a magnificent and awe-inspiring sight, as, precisely at 3 a.m., just as I gave the word to my guns to open fire, the whole of the sky was lit by gun flashes, followed by the roar of the shells and the pop-popping of machine guns. The whole of the artillery and machine guns had opened fire absolutely simultaneously and pandemonium reigned. In the hollow about 100 yards to the rear of my gun positions the R.E.'s had formed a dump of barbed wire, wiring stakes and bundles of sandbags. The Turks were evidently aware of this dump, for shortly after the show started they began to shell it with whizz-bangs, all of which passed directly over us, and, judging from the

noise they made, they seemed to be only about a few inches above our heads. We appeared to have been very successful with our efforts at camouflage, for during the whole show not one shell burst actually in my group, although numbers came unpleasantly close. This seemed to indicate that the Turks did not know our exact position. I naturally made continuous tours round my group. All the fellows were working like mad and actually looked like niggers. The two men in each emplacement could hardly be seen in the light of a smoky candle, for the emplacement was filled with smoke and fumes and steam. The noise was awful and the smell of hot oil and cordite was almost suffocating. After a very short time in an emplacement one became almost absolutely deaf and had literally to shout into the other fellow's ear to make him hear. After firing every few belts, the gun had to be oiled up and after every two thousand or so rounds the barrel casing had to be refilled with water. The barrel had to be changed as soon as there was the slightest possibility of the one in use becoming badly worn and the laying of the gun had to be constantly checked. In the belt filling dugout the noise was not so terrific, but everyone available was sitting round filling belts just as hard as he could go, while specially detailed men were trotting backwards and forwards taking filled belts up to the guns and bringing back the empty belts to be refilled. The three belt-filling machines worked excellently and but for them I doubt whether we could possibly have kept pace with the work. From time to time I relieved the men in the emplacements with others from the belt-filling dugout so as to give everybody a change of occupation as much as possible. On the second day one of my guns burst its barrel, thus putting itself out of action. A new one could not be sent up from the ordnance until next morning. Apart from this misadventure, I had no trouble at all with the guns during the whole show. After zero plus 120 minutes fire was opened, as required, on orders from the M.G. Company commander and during the next few days we were constantly called upon. For the final attack on the Rafah-Balah Ridge on the 7th November my group was allotted two targets—a portion of the Rafah-Balah Ridge and Ivy Trench. After firing for some time I received a telephone message that I was to stop firing, as the Turks appeared to have withdrawn. Later on, after daybreak, I was ordered to join the Company on the Rafah-Balah Ridge. We were not allowed to open fire from the group and to register on the targets before the action, consequently we had no means of knowing how accurate our fire was. On the 6th November, however, I arranged with Lieut. Butterly, who was then forward, to spot for me in a shoot on Angle Trench. He was able to get good observation and reported that I was on the target. This was most comforting, as when firing at a range of over 2,000 yards the slightest error in one's calculations makes a very big difference. This was the first time we had ever carried out a big barrage shoot of this description,

involving firing over the heads of our own troops, and we were naturally very curious as to how the infantry battalions would take it. Not one single complaint has, however, reached me from any of our battalions and I feel quite sure we should soon have heard about it if any of our shots had fallen amongst our own fellows. Nobody, of course, will ever know what damage our barrage guns actually did to the Turks, but it must have been, to say the least, most disconcerting to them to have had hundreds of thousands of machine gun bullets directed on to specially selected areas, rendering them absolutely impassable and untenable. In this action, my group fired nearly 70,000 rounds and I suffered only one casualty, Lance-Corporal Lindsell wounded.

Eight guns, known as the mobile guns, were detailed to go forward and consolidate, these being Nos. 3 and 4 Sections, under Lieutenants Barklie and Harwood respectively. A sub-section of No. 3 Section (Lieut. Barklie) supported the attack upon Rafah Redoubt, the other sub-section of No. 3 Section (Lieut. Wilson) that upon Beach Post, whilst a sub-section of No. 4 Section (2nd Lieut. Wood) went to Sea Post. At 3.56 a.m. X Group, comprising the other sub-section of No. 4 Section, under Lieut. Harwood, moved to Cricket Redoubt. The sub-section of No. 3 Section in Beach Post was placed at the disposal of the 1/7th Essex with a view to moving up to the junction of the communication trench with Cricket Redoubt from Yunis trench. It could not be definitely ascertained whether the junction at Yunis trench had been taken, so Lieut. Wilson attempted to reach it via Cricket Redoubt, but found it still in enemy occupation. He, therefore, returned to Pebble Post and consolidated. There a good target was later obtained upon some Turks on the Rafah Balah ridge who had come into the open to repulse an attack. A machine gun was captured at Pebble Post and another at Rafah Redoubt. The next day Pebble Post section again had a good target on Rafah Balah ridge, firing upon the Turks who were massing to counter-attack the 1/4th Essex and also as they moved forward from their trenches. On November 4th the Sea Post sub-section moved into Beach Post and the day after the sub-sections in Rafah Redoubt and Pebble Post were relieved by W Barrage Group. On November 7th, after the Turks had withdrawn, the sub-section in Cricket Redoubt moved up to Yunis junction. Then, soon after day-break, all the mobile guns joined the Company at Yunis trench. No. 1 Section assembled with the 1/6th Essex at Anchor Inn at 7 a.m. The remainder bivouacked on the beach between Cricket Well and Sheikh Ajlin, being later in the day rejoined by No. 1 Section. In the evening the whole Company marched to Anchor Inn with the Brigade. The only casualties in the mobile sections occurred in Lieut. Barklie's sub-section, when three other ranks were killed and one wounded, making a total for the Company of three other ranks killed and four other ranks wounded. The casualties to guns were not important. Only

one gun of Z group was put out of action owing to the bullet turning and penetrating the barrel and barrel casing.

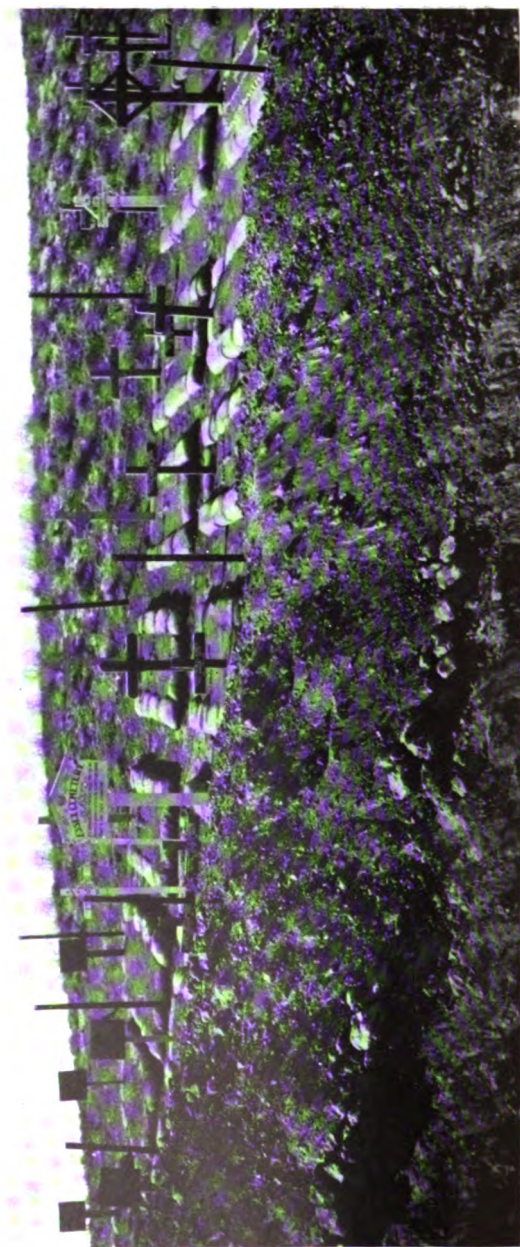
The work of mobile guns of No. 4 Section has been graphically told by Licut. Harwood : It was with great confidence that we of No. 4 Section took up our allotted position on the night of 1st November and proceeded to mount our guns, light the candles in our night-firing boxes and generally to ensure that all was ready for zero hour ; an hour for which we had waited for so many weeks and prepared for with such enthusiasm and thoroughness. We were all determined that so far as our small share in the events of this night could contribute to the general success of all engaged on this section of the attack, there should be no fourth battle of Gaza. We had previously tested our gun platforms as far as this was possible without actually firing the guns, and for weeks we had been studying aerial maps of the enemy's trenches in an endeavour to discover the correct elevations to put on our guns during the successive stages of our infantry's advance. This was no easy matter, because our maps were none too good and especially lacking in reliable information as to contours. The importance of reliable data thereon was obvious from the fact that our orders were to concentrate our fire, firstly, on to the Turkish front line trench ; secondly, on to Cricket Redoubt, and, thirdly, to increase our range with the idea of hampering the retirement of any Turks from that Redoubt. This scheme had been worked out on a time table to synchronize with the various stages of our own infantry's advance. We were obliged to decide on our gun elevations entirely by the aid of maps, for the contour of the country prevented our ever having a look at Cricket Redoubt, and our programme was not simplified by the fact that it was to be carried through at night. Enough of the preparations. I will move on to what I consider the worst time of all except one (which I won't specify) in any soldier's experience—waiting for zero hour, holding a watch in one hand and an electric torch in the other and thinking—preferably about shop. Would the belt filling machines or a gun jam hopelessly ? In fact, would anything prevent our firing rapid with both guns for fifty minutes ? We were to open fire at zero hour, which ultimately arrived after what seemed to be an infinity of waiting and was heralded by a perfect pandemonium of noise. Everyone lets off everything explosive which they possess and the air is soon filled with smoke and fumes. The din prevented one's voice being heard even when shouted into a neighbour's ear. However, things were going splendidly, as far as our own little show was concerned ; in fact, it was obvious that the opposition's artillery either did not think us worth bothering about or were after bigger fish. I don't wish it to be inferred that nothing came our way—whiz bangs did in plenty and a certain amount of H.E., but it all burst either sufficiently in front or to the rear of our position except for an occasional unlucky one for us and especially for

poor Amies, who was hit. We put him in the dug-out and when, later, I went to have a look at him, I found him trying to fill belts in the intervals of being very sick. A very plucky effort. After about half an hour the Nos. 1 on each gun were nearly suffocated with gases, smoke and steam from them, so that I thought it advisable to let the Nos. 2 have a turn. I cannot remember a single hitch in our programme during the whole of this first phase; neither gun gave any serious trouble and all belt boxes were refilled by the end of this first fifty minutes. This had been possible because we began the proceedings with a large number of extra belts already filled. We had fired about 12,000 rounds. Now for our next phase, which was to follow up our infantry and select gun positions in Cricket Redoubt, assuming that this objective had already been taken. We packed up all our equipment and began our journey into the unknown. Fortunately, the Turks had ceased shelling this sector and we succeeded in crossing No Man's Land, losing neither ourselves nor our belongings. The first streaks of daylight helped me to recognize the trenches (or what was left of them) and we continued our advance down a trench which appeared to lead in the direction we wanted. Having followed this trench for some distance, I was delighted to meet a party of the 1/6th Essex and, a few moments, later Colonel Ewer, who, though not in a conversational mood, substantiated the fact that we had arrived at our destination. It was daylight by this time and I could discern the general features of the Redoubt itself and the lie of ground around it. I selected gun positions (X on plan). The left of these was ideal, having a splendid field of fire up a long valley (Z on plan), and the remains of a Turkish doctor's dug-out near the position was not to be despised. The right position was not so good, being very exposed; in fact, the whole Redoubt could be so described, for the trenches were very shallow and every man therein must have been clearly visible from the commanding ridge (A—F). This ridge still appeared to be in the hands of the opposition, for there was much bombing with trench mortars going on at "F." Even with glasses I could not with certainty distinguish friend from foe, the distance being about 1,000 yards. I, therefore, thought it too risky to attempt to join in the fray at "F," but I searched the enemy's position for any target to the north of that point and a machine gun soon advertised its existence by potting at us. I soon spotted their familiar steel shield perched above their parapet and we immediately opened fire with the right gun—short bursts to find the range. By the aid of my glasses I was able to see where our bursts hit up the sand, and could direct Sergeant Collett, who was firing the gun, on to the target. The distance was too great for him to be able to see the result of his fire. When I was confident that we were on the target we gave them a good long burst, about fifty rounds, and the shield disappeared, but made several reappearances at different

points before it finally withdrew from the unequal conflict. In my opinion, we put the gun and its personnel out of action, for during their final appearance they freely exposed themselves. This entertainment went on all day, our only inconvenience being that we were favoured with one round of shrapnel about every ten minutes and half-hourly during the night. The next day we watched an attack on the northern end of the ridge (A—F) by troops entrenched on the ridge "G." They charged across the valley to the north of us and got into the enemy trenches, but were finally driven out and re-occupied their former position. Meanwhile, the trench fighting at "F" continued, but I could not detect that much ground was gained. The following day our artillery bombarded the ridge (A—F) and at dawn the next day the 1/6th Essex and ourselves advanced on to the same ridge without meeting any opposition whatever. The Turk had apparently withdrawn during the night, assuming that any had survived the bombardment of the day before. His determined defence of that position was a very fine effort, for I believe that all his artillery had been withdrawn and his other defences had fallen two days previously. So much for Cricket Redoubt and No. 4 Section, 161st Machine Gun Company. Incidentally, what a tame story it is as I have tried to write it. No mention of Sergeant Collett standing on our parapet to put the finishing touches to the right gun emplacement in broad daylight and thereby bringing down "coals of fire" upon us for a few moments; nor of my tin hat being shamefully dented by shrapnel while protecting my unoffending head; nor of enormous jars of water to tempt the very thirsty, but which we dared not touch for fear that they were poisoned; nor of a gigantic prisoner whom the left gun party proudly brought to me; nor of a visit from Colonel Wilmer, O.C. 1/7th Essex, and Captain Brooks, O.C. 161st Machine Gun Company, who had been assiduously sniped all the way from the neighbourhood of "F." I still possess mementoes of Cricket Redoubt—two strings of beads left to me by that Turkish doctor who had obviously departed from his dug-out without ceremony. He also left the most gorgeous sandbags—cushions from his harem—and a smart uniform, with accoutrements. As far as I know, anyone can go and collect them any day.

THE PURSUIT.

Whilst the remainder of the XXI Corps brushed the Turks before them on the left, the XX Corps were equally active on the right, but the 54th Division were not with the advance. They were retained in Gaza for some days as Corps reserve and for the work of clearing up. On November 8th the 161st Brigade marched to Jebaliye, a village two or three miles to the north of Gaza, where an outpost line was taken up. Then on November 10th the Brigade concentrated once again at Anchor Inn and two days later, less the 161st T.M. Battery, the Brigade marched



ESSEX CEMETERY, GAZA

to El Majdal—an old stronghold of the Philistines, which had played some part in Biblical story. This village was sixteen miles north of Gaza and the Brigade found the road rough, but the men were moving once again after the enemy and were in splendid condition and spirits. The next day (November 13th) a short march of five miles took the Brigade to Julis, where, under cover and as reserve to the 75th Division, they rested whilst an attack was progressing on the front. About noon there was another short march of three miles to Suafir el Gharbiye—where the night was spent. The Brigade moved on next day to El Qastine, a poor place made of mud huts, and on the 18th to Yibna (known to history as Jabnael), twelve miles away, where the Brigade bivouacked. On November 19th the men were on the move again, this time for Ramle, on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, which had been a headquarters of the Turkish Flying Corps. The Brigade was delayed at Rishon le Zion because the road was blocked by a tractor which had broken down and the detour over country full of vineyards and very high and thick hedges occupied considerable time. During the halt an amusing incident is recorded of the 1/5th Essex by Major Eric Wilson: "A car, having threaded its way through the narrow lane, arrived at the head of the column to find its road barred also. The occupants turned out to be General Allenby, our chief, and General Wingate, High Commissioner for Egypt. Some difficulty was experienced in turning the car in the soft earth, and both these famous generals lent their weight with the rest on the wheels of the car. A few kind words from the Chief pleased us all mightily." Another officer records that he saw the General's car stuck in the sand and that while the Commander-in-Chief got out and pushed it "we all stood at the present!" At Ramle the 1/5th and 1/7th Essex provided outposts for a line three miles to the east in wild and rugged country, with numerous uncovered wells. It was almost dark and raining heavily when the troops arrived and the 1/5th Essex were gratified that the skill of Major Wilson in map reading and finding direction caused the Battalion to be the only unit of two brigades which took up the exact position. Owing to the flooded ground the transport did not arrive until after midnight and the chill weather caused much discomfort. However, the rain cleared away, the men's clothing dried in wind and sun and the outpost battalions were soon busy building sangars. When the two battalions rejoined the Brigade in Ramle on the afternoon of November 20th the heavy rain came on again and the night was spent around huge fires made from the stacks of wood which had been collected by Turks as locomotive fuel. On November 23rd the Brigade headquarters, with the 1/4th and 1/6th Essex, left for Selme, five miles east of Jaffa, followed two days later by the 1/5th and 1/7th, who, on passing 54th Division headquarters, near Ramle, were assured that they were bound for winter quarters in Jaffa. The action at El 'Auja was at that

time being fought, which resulted in the advance along the coast being checked for some weeks. How it happened is told later on.

4th The 1/4th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel Barrington Wells) were still attached to the 162nd Brigade when, on November 4th, the Battalion bivouacked in Sugar Valley. Thence on November 6th they took over the Gun Hill system from the 11th Londons. They moved that night to Turtle Hill and were in support to the two battalions which attacked the Sheikh Redwan defences. The Battalion provided an observation party to the Division and was visited during the night by the Corps commander (General Bullin). Next day the 1/4th Essex reverted to the 161st Brigade. Rations were not too plentiful at this period, until Ramle was reached, but the scarcity was met from Padre Johnson's "stores." The cigarettes were particularly welcome. November 8th and 9th were spent in Jebaliye, followed by a move to Anchor Inn, whence the march to Majdal was undertaken. The 1/4th were much below strength, the only reinforcement having been the small nucleus from Deir el Balah. The Battalion received orders to move at very short notice and left a large fatigue party to follow which had early that morning been sent to Green Hill. As a consequence it was not until the night was well advanced that the Battalion was up to strength again. The next day (November 13th) a start was made in the early morning for Julis, where kits were dumped and the men proceeded in fighting order to Suafir el Gharbiye, in reserve to the 75th Division, who were in action at Junction Station. In the late afternoon the Battalion returned to Gharbiye, where it bivouacked, and on the evening of November 14th-15th started for Tell-et-Turmus, north-east of Gharbiye, for outpost duty on the right flank of the 75th Division. The following day patrols reconnoitred Tell es Safi, two miles east of Turmus, finding all clear of enemy troops, though the natives in the village were inclined to be hostile. By way of Yibna, Ramle was reached on November 19th. The Battalion had passed through enemy aerodromes in a state of utter destruction as a result of a bombing raid on November 7th. A little Jewish girl at a bread shop, who was a native of Leeds and who was the only person who could speak English in Ramle, told a moving story of the raid and said over fifty Arabs were killed through their eagerness to see the British planes. Bivouac was struck on November 23rd, when, with the 1/6th Essex, the 1/4th marched along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, broke off to the right opposite the Agricultural College to the village of Selme, and slept on high ground to the north of that village.

5th Major Eric Wilson was in temporary command of the 1/5th Essex at Rafah Redoubt at midnight on November 3rd—a glorious moonlight night, which enabled him to notice that "Rafah looked like an old clothes shop. The burst Turkish sandbags, many of them made of shirts and other clothing, were strewn everywhere." Consolidation of works proceeded actively, notwithstanding

Turkish artillery fire, until the Battalion was relieved by the 8th Hants on the evening of November 5th, when the 1/5th went back to Sheikh Ajlin. The activity of the enemy pointed to a counter-attack, and when the Battalion moved out the shelling was so severe that "it was a miracle there were no casualties, as we had to move over the open in what had previously been No Man's Land." All ranks were anticipating a rest, but intimation was given that they were to attack, with other battalions, the Rafah-Balah trench system. The position was found to be evacuated and the morning of November 7th was devoted to salvage and burial of dead of the 1/7th Essex, who had fallen in the earlier fighting. The movements of the Battalion subsequently conformed to those of the Brigade until Ramle was reached. The 1/5th and 1/7th left two days later in the track of the other two battalions to find that the action at Nahr-el-'Auja had taken place and that the enemy had regained command of the river.

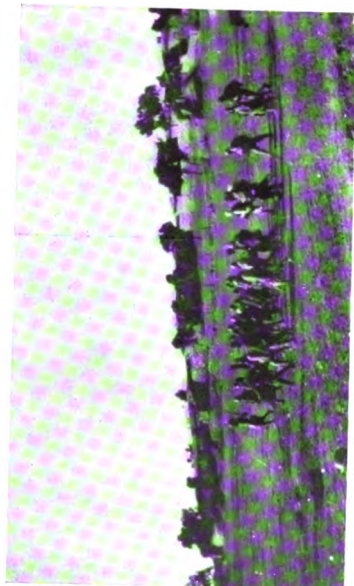
6th The 1/6th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Ewer) relieved the 7th on November 4th, at Cricket Redoubt, Arthur Trench, and a partially-dug trench. "D" Company, on the right half of the new line, were severely shelled. "B" Company were in Cricket Redoubt and upon the left half of the new line, whilst Battalion headquarters were in Arthur Trench. The next day "A" Company took over Cricket Redoubt from "B" Later in the day "B" Company moved back to the Redoubt and "A" Company returned to the beach 350 yards south-west of Sea Post. Heavy enemy shelling was noted. On the night of November 5th-6th "B" Company and Battalion headquarters were relieved by the 1/7th Essex and returned to Sea Post, the 1/6th having been ordered to prepare for an attack on the Rafah-Balah ridge. The pioneers were sent forward to Cricket Redoubt to establish battle headquarters. The R.E. laid a tape on a line roughly parallel to the objective immediately in front of Hugh trench. There was no answering fire to the barrage from the enemy and reports later came to hand from the assaulting companies that they had found the position evacuated. The artillery bombardment was stopped and patrols of the Battalion were pushed as far forward as Anchor Inn and High Wood. Early on the morning of November 7th the Battalion moved to Anchor Inn, where it bivouacked temporarily, whilst strong patrols were sent to search the town and vicinity of Gaza. "D" Company established a visual signalling station at the Turkish hospital and sent patrols to Ali el Muntar, gaining touch with the 75th Division. An officer and several other prisoners were captured in the town. At 11 a.m. the Battalion returned to Sea Post and at 7 p.m. moved to Anchor Inn by way of the Beach, Cricket Well and thence by compass bearing in support of the outpost line. The whole Brigade, less the 1/4th Essex, bivouacked there the night, protected by strong pickets. On November 8th the Battalion, with the Brigade, established an

outpost line in the vicinity of Australia Hill, the 1/5th Essex being on the left and 1/5th Hants on the right. "A" Company held Australia Hill, "B" Company Chaytor Hill, "C" Company on the left commanded Gaza-Deir Sneid road, with "D" Company in reserve. The move to Majdal on November 12th was hurriedly undertaken. Men unable to march were left behind with the stores, which could not be taken owing to the lack of transport. The regimental reserve of S.A.A. was reduced to 16 boxes; in fact, the Battalion commenced the march with very little more than they stood up in. The movements of the Brigade for the succeeding days have been chronicled above. At Mesmiye—"a dirty hole full of dead, which had to be burned, and accumulations of filth"—the 1/6th formed the outpost line on November 14th. Ramle was reached in the pouring rain on November 19th and next day Captain H. G. Mansfield, Sergeant H. Moss, Corporal H. Brown and six privates proceeded to headquarters for service as police. The rain caused a change of bivouac ground on the 21st to a spot where the soil was sandy. "The water," wrote an officer, "was putrid, but oranges were plentiful and some ate nothing else in preference to drinking the awful liquid served up as tea!" The Battalion reached Selme on November 23rd.

7th The 1/7th Essex slept at Jebaliye on November 8th, but did not go into the village. The officers messed together, as so few of them were left. On November 10th the Battalion marched back to camp between Anchor Inn and Sh. Redwan. The afternoon of the 11th was very hot, for a khamseen blew all day. The march to El Majdal on November 12th from mid-day to 9 p.m. was most fatiguing. The men wore their tin hats in the blazing sun and felt the heat very much. The Turkish base was passed on the way, piled high with stores. On November 13th the Battalion was on the move again at 4.30 a.m. and passed through El Majdal—"like a scene from Kismet," one officer described it. At 9.30 a.m. packs were dumped at Julis and another march of five miles brought the Battalion to Sherqiye. The night was very cold and the blankets did not arrive until early the next morning. The Battalion moved five miles on November 14th to El Qastine. "Rations," wrote an officer, "come in fits and starts and the water is a most difficult problem. One has to think if one will waste any of the precious liquid by making tea!" November 15th and 16th were spent at El Qastine, which was deemed "a beastly place, all dust and red hot wind." Whilst there, however, came the welcome news that Jaffa had fallen. Yibna—"a large village with an odd shaped mosque on the top,"—was reached on November 18th. There were numbers of dead horses and cattle lying about and "D" Company spent the afternoon pulling them off the roadways and burying them. It was there that the Battalion saw their first oranges, all green. The march of nine miles north-east of Ramle over sandy roads was a trial of temper. Upon arrival



RAMLEH.



Batch of Prisoners passing E.L. KUSTINEH.



Removal of Male German Inhabitants from SARONA.



GAZA to JAFFA : Troops crossing Stream.

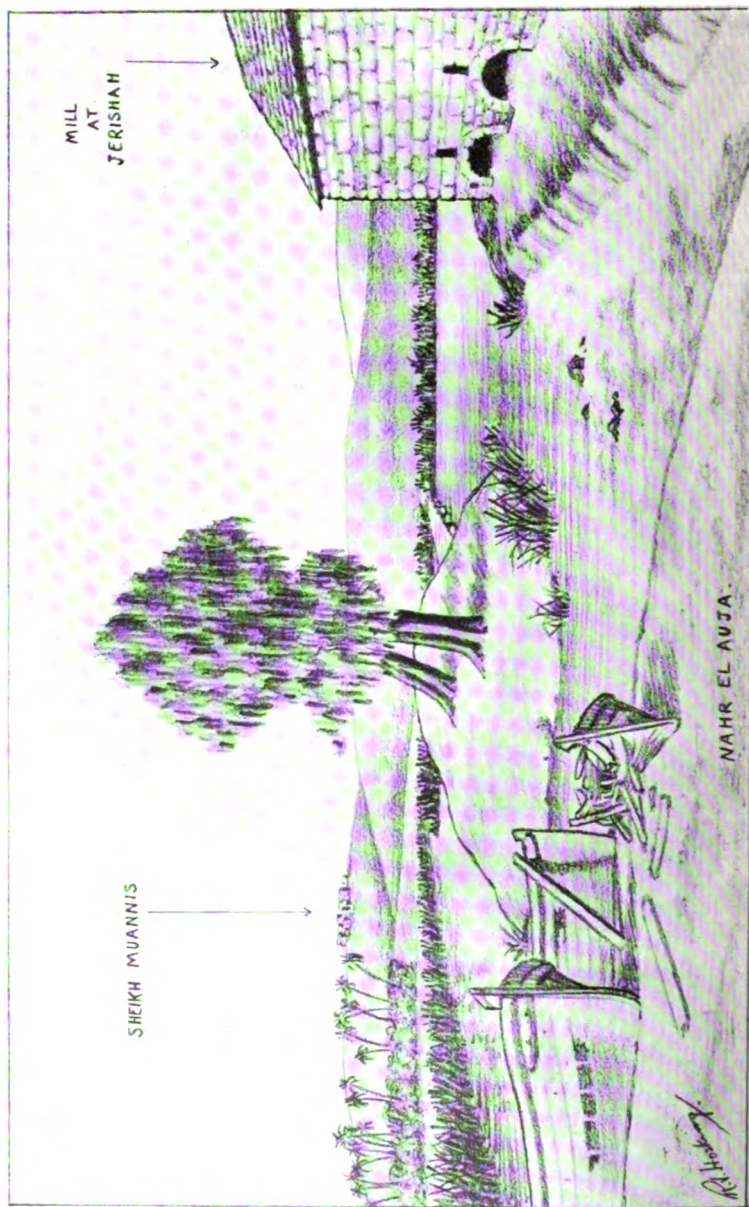
the Battalion had to take up a long outpost line. It poured with rain all night and everyone was soaked. Ramle, in the dawn, looked "a lovely town glittering in the distance," but when the Battalion had orders to withdraw into it, they found it a mean place, though admitted to be "astonishingly picturesque." The rain on November 20th soaked everything and made the roads so muddy that the men slipped about. The 1/7th spent the night in a wood dump by the station and lighted huge fires. Camp was shifted to higher ground on November 21st and clothes rapidly dried in the sun. "We went up to the top of the Crusaders' Tower," wrote an officer, "where there came up to us the warm scents of the orchards. The Vale of Sharon stretched before us, with Jaffa by the sea, then Lydda and the pink and mauve foothills."

M.G. The 161st Machine Gun Company marched with the Brigade when it left Anchor Inn for Jebaliye on November 8th. No. 1 Section was detailed for outpost duty with the 1/6th Essex—one sub-section (Lieut. Tallon) near the Jaffa Road and the other sub-section (Lieut. Clive Needell) on Australia Hill. The troops were back at Anchor Inn on November 10th, understanding that they would remain there for several days for a good rest. Sudden orders were received on November 12th, however, to move at noon to Majdal, a long and tiring march of nearly twenty miles, which took until 9.30 p.m. At 6.15 a.m. the next day the Company started for Julis and at 10.45 a.m. from Julis to Suafir-el-Gharbiye, arriving at about 1 p.m. On November 14th Mesmiye was reached, where No. 1 Section was detailed for outpost duty with the 1/6th Essex, where it remained until 17th, when it received orders to rejoin the Company at El Qastine. The march was to Yibna on the following day, in miserable weather, and on the 19th Ramle was reached, where a stay was made until the 23rd. The 20th was a miserably wet day and evening. A heap of logs had been left by the Turks and bonfires were soon lit to cheer the troops. Selme was the destination on the 23rd and then followed the combat of the 'Auja, of which more anon.

THE COMBAT OF THE 'AUJA.

In the rapid pursuit which followed the capture of Gaza, the Turkish Eighth Army had been forced to retire to the line of Nahr el 'Auja, four miles north-north-east of Jaffa ; on the left the Seventh Army had been pushed into the hills. "It was Sir Edmund Allenby's intention to contain the Eighth Army in the plain, follow the Seventh Army eastward into the hills before it could reorganize and capture Jerusalem." Jaffa, the port of Jerusalem, was occupied on November 16th, and thereafter it was hoped that by keeping the Turks on the move, a formidable natural obstacle, the river Nahr el 'Auja, would be crossed without serious resistance. The river is from 40 to 60 feet wide and has an average depth of 10ft., though liable to flood in the winter rains, when it is only fordable at the bar which crosses the estuary, and there the depth is about 3ft. 6in. The land on both sides is marshy. On the morning of November 24th, the New Zealand Brigade of the Anzac Mounted Division crossed the river at the bar, and, moving on, occupied a line covering Kh Hadra and Sheikh Muwannis. The former, a ruin, was about three miles from the coast and was reached from the 'Auja by a mill dam and stone bridge whilst the village of Sh. Muwannis was only a mile and a half from the sea and the road thereto crossed the river by a mill dam at Jerishe. These two strong points, Kh. Hadra and Sheikh Muwannis, were at the southern ends of two spurs, with abrupt slopes to the river, which was some five hundred yards distant. From the heights there was excellent observation of Jaffa. Surrounded by fields and open country, there were good fields of fire.

The mounted troops were supported by the 161st Brigade. The latter, less the 1/5th and 1/7th, marched from Ramle to Selme, which was reached on the evening of November 23rd. There it was joined by the 270th Brigade, R.F.A. In the morning of November 24th the Brigade took over the line on the south bank of the river and thus relieved the New Zealand Mounted Rifles. The latter had been concentrated at the bar for the passage of the river, to secure the bridgeheads and fords and to round up the small Turkish outposts on the northern bank. This operation was successfully carried out. Muwannis was occupied by the Canterbury Regiment before 2 p.m. The Wellington Regiment, which followed, was at Kh. Hadra by 3.30 p.m. and in possession of the bridge over the 'Auja leading to that place. The New Zealanders took prisoners from the 31st Regiment of the 3rd (Turkish) Division. The 270th Brigade, R.F.A., were disposed on the south bank to give support to the Anzacs. One company each of the 1/4th and 1/6th Essex advanced to



MILL
AT
JERISHAH

SHEIKH MUANNIS

NAHR EL AUJA

the river crossings, the 1/6th holding that to the south of Sheikh Muwannis and the 1/4th that near Kh. Hadra in support. A pontoon bridge was thrown across the river at Jerishe. It was getting dusk when Brigadier-General Marriott-Dodington received a personal order from the G.O.C. Anzac Mounted Division to occupy the two points (Sh. Muwannis and Kh. Hadra), each with two companies, the cavalrymen forming a screen of outposts from a mile and a half to two miles to the north. The situation seemed so far quiescent that the 270th Brigade, R.F.A., were informed that they could bivouac. The 161st Brigade headquarters were established at Sarona, towards which the 1/5th and 1/7th were marching. It was dark before two companies of the 1/6th Essex, having crossed the 'Auja, arrived upon a line north of Sheikh Muwannis and two companies of the 1/4th Essex (Captain Fanshawe) occupied the high ground near Kh. Hadra. Little could be done, therefore, by way of defensive preparation. At 5.15 a.m. on November 25th enemy pressure caused the patrols of the New Zealand Mounted Brigade to withdraw.¹ At 5.40 a.m. the enemy's artillery opened upon Kh. Hadra and the bridge over the Nahr el 'Auja lying to the south. The noise of the firing caused the brigadier to ride out of Sarona to the river, where he found that Kh. Hadra was being attacked from the north-east and north, and hostile shells were bursting over it. There did not appear to be any movement against Sheikh Muwannis and a message was accordingly sent to the companies of 1/6th Essex stationed there to support the 1/4th Essex at Kh. Hadra, but it was not received. The 270th Brigade, R.F.A., were also ordered into action, but before they were able to unlimber the enemy (8 a.m.) attacked Kh. Hadra with a force estimated at between 4,000 and 5,000, and forced the New Zealanders and 1/4th Essex to withdraw and cross the river, suffering considerable loss. There they took up a position on the south bank covering the bridge. The Turkish movement extended to Sheikh Muwannis and the 1/6th Essex were, in turn, about 9.30 a.m., forced to evacuate the position and cross the river by the bridge at Jerishe, also sustaining loss. The Aucklanders escaped being cut off by galloping over the sea ford under cover of the machine guns of their Brigade and the fire of the Somerset Battery. Having regained the northern bank of the river, the main Turkish force moved to the east and then, crossing the 'Auja, they entered Mulebbis. Thus the prospect which had opened up so brightly on the 24th had changed completely by the 25th, and it was not until December 20th-21st that the 'Auja was again forced, this time by the 52nd Division.

1. The Official History states that two squadrons of the Auckland Regiment were in front of Hadra, one of the Wellingtons at Muwannis and a squadron of the Canterbury at the mouth of the river. The remainder of the Brigade was on the south bank. The Aucklanders reported hostile concentration at 4.15 a.m. The Canterburys were ordered to cross the river and advance against the right flank, but before this could be done Muwannis had been abandoned. The Wellingtons were ordered to be ready and cross at Jerishe, but were held up by gunfire and were withdrawn at 9.50 a.m.

The outcome was very disappointing for the 161st Brigade, who, with the rest of the 54th Division, had been marched rapidly from Gaza to support the offensive from Jaffa. There seems little doubt that the movement was part of the offensive which the Turks had planned with the intent of holding up the British advance and preventing the fall of Jerusalem. It developed in full strength a day or two later and the concentration of troops for that purpose could not have been made specially to prevent the crossing of the 'Auja. If the operations of the Mounted Division had been completed earlier, the infantry companies would have reached their positions before dark and thus been able to make better defensive arrangements. The onslaught of the Turks in the early morning came with little or no warning and had the better possibility of success because it was well supported by artillery, whereas the 270th Brigade, R.F.A., had, under orders of the G.O.C. Anzac Mounted Division, withdrawn from the ground and gone into bivouac. It was one of those occasions where the situation developed very rapidly and unexpectedly.¹

4th ESSEX AT KH. HADRA.

The events at Kh. Hadra have been related in detail by Captain P. W. Scott, 1/4th Essex, who was liaison officer between battalion headquarters and the advanced companies. He says: About 11 a.m. the Battalion was informed that the 1/4th and 1/6th Essex were to co-operate with the Anzacs (N.Z.M.R.) and Somerset Horse Artillery, who were holding the heights on the south of the River 'Auja. The effort was to try to force the passage of the river and secure the higher ground on the north side from Sh. Muwannis to Kh. Hadra, with the right flank resting on the river bank to the right of Kh. Hadra. On Hill 265 were the headquarters of the Camel Corps, who covered all the ground towards Mulebbis. The execution of this operation would prevent the enemy overlooking Sarona and Jaffa and allow the army freedom from observation along the road leading out of Sarona towards the crossings of the 'Auja. The 1/4th thus relieved the Anzacs on the right of the road and the 1/6th did likewise at Summeil on the left. The view we had of the position I long remembered. The heights on the north side of the river overlooked those on the southern bank. They were quite close to the river at the mouth, but as they ran inland the low ground by the river banks widened considerably, especially on the southern side, where a fertile belt extended for a distance of from half to three-quarters

1. The comment of the Official Historian (Captain Cyril Falls), contained in Volume I, runs: "The defects of the operation are sufficiently obvious. A weak force was hastily pushed across a river 40ft. in breadth and set to hold a position of insufficient depth with the river at its back, with every prospect that the enemy would make a strenuous effort to regain the bank. The 270th Brigade, R.F.A., was moved back into bivouac after the crossing and arrived on the scene of action the following day too late to be of much service, the whole artillery defence thus resting upon a single horse artillery battery." The Turkish force employed consisted of parts of the 3rd and 7th Divisions of the XXII Corps."

of a mile. It was interlaced with orange groves, which evidently grew in abundance in the swampy land. Towards Mulebbis the marshy area increased considerably. The whole of the ground was thoroughly saturated as a result of the heavy rains of the previous days and the river was full to overflowing, particularly at Jerishe Mill. About 3 p.m., after a few short bursts of shell-fire from the horse artillery, the Anzacs galloped across the ford at the mouth of the river and rode up the steep, grassy slopes towards the ridge of which the dominating points were Sh. Muwannis and Kh. Hadra. At the same time, the two 1/4th Essex companies demonstrated over the low-lying ground towards Jerishe Mill and bridge to divert the enemy's attention from the cavalry enterprise. The Turks, surprised and in considerably less numbers than were anticipated, offered little opposition and parties of them readily surrendered. According to plan, the Anzacs, with the advanced companies of the 1/4th and 1/6th Essex, then occupied positions on the ridge. At dusk the Anzacs parked their horses at the Ford, Jerishe Mill and Mill and Bridge, and formed a line of standing patrols in front, with the Essex infantry companies forming a line of resistance along the ridge. "B" and "C" Companies of the 1/4th Essex were in and around Kh. Hadra, with a machine gun section in Kh. Hadra itself. The supporting companies of the 1/4th, with the Battalion headquarters, were in their original positions on the heights on the south side of the river, communication being maintained between the troops on both sides of the river by means of lamp signal. The artillery withdrew to Sarona. The earlier hours of the night were without incident, but just before dawn (about 4 a.m.) the Anzac standing patrols reported to the companies that there was considerable enemy movement in front and this developed into desultory rifle fire. The news was reported to battalion headquarters. The enemy fire, both rifle and machine gun, rapidly grew in intensity and the standing patrols withdrew into Kh. Hadra. As soon as the light permitted, the Turks shelled the Kh. Hadra and the river banks, and ultimately the heights on the south side with both shrapnel and high explosive, affording evidence that a counter-attack was in preparation of considerable strength. The Anzacs and 1/4th Essex put up a stout resistance to the attack and suffered heavy casualties, with loss of machine guns and Lewis guns destroyed by the enemy artillery fire. By sheer weight of numbers they were forced to withdraw, but rallied on the lower ground near the river bank covering the Mill and Bridge, and still maintaining lateral communication with the 1/6th Essex on the left at Sh. Muwannis. The enemy, having now got possession of Kh. Hadra, were intent on forcing us over the river and kept up a fire of all arms upon the support area to prevent reinforcements moving up. The troops on the northern bank were ultimately forced to withdraw across the river, mainly because the Turks were able to place a machine gun on the right flank near the bank

and were sweeping the whole course of the river and low-lying ground to Jerishe Mill. Some of the men tried to swim and in the heavy current lost their lives, whilst others ran the gauntlet over the broken walls of the Mill and Bridge. Nearly all the officers having been killed or wounded, the survivors took up positions on the south bank in front of, and to the right of, the Mill and remained there. The enemy made no further advance, seemingly satisfied with having recovered his original position at Kh. Hadra. The artillery were recalled to support the infantry, although short of ammunition, and commenced to shell Kh. Hadra. An artillery observation post was established with "A" Company, 1/4th Essex, on a hill known as Z30, and that company was then pushed up to the Mill and Bridge. A counter-attack was decided upon with artillery support. In readiness therefor, the troops moved over the river to the north side and awaited there the arrival of "D" Company. At this time, between an hour and a hour and a half of the withdrawal from Kh. Hadra, what transpired to be the main enemy attack was delivered against the 1/6th Essex at Sh. Muwannis and after heavy fighting their advanced companies were also forced across the river to Summeil, thus both flanks had been driven in. There was a suggestion later that had the 1/4th Essex been able to hold on to Kh. Hadra, the 1/6th could have retained Sh. Muwannis. The enemy strength made that impossible. Moreover, both the 1/4th and 1/6th Essex were much under strength as a result of losses at the Third Battle of Gaza, which had not been replaced, and there was no hope of support reaching them to enable them to hold on. The 1/4th maintained lateral communication when north of the river, and as I was in charge of the situation at the Mill and Bridge, I did the only thing possible in the circumstances, viz., I got the Anzacs to place their Hotchkiss gun, the only automatic weapon available, in a position which enabled them to enfilade the Turkish flank when advancing upon Sh. Muwannis, and the Anzacs did excellent work indeed. For some unexplained reason, communication by flag signal between the two battalions and with the artillery broke down. "D" Company, 1/4th Essex, did not arrive and, as there was no prospect of a successful counter-attack, it was decided to withdraw again to the south side and line the river bank. When this had been done, orders came by runner to withdraw to the metalled road about 600 yards to the rear of the Mill and and Bridge. Casualties ensued during the withdrawal. Further orders came to leave a strong platoon, with two Lewis guns (provided by "A" Company), on the road to cover the Mill and Bridge and the remainder withdrew to their original position on the south bank, whilst the Anzacs rode back to Sarona. The remainder of the day was quiet, for the enemy made no attempt to cross the river. At dusk the 1/5th Essex relieved the 1/4th, who withdrew into Sarona and bivouacked there for the night. At roll call the combined strength of "B" and "C" Companies

mustered less than a platoon in numbers. We did not like the setback, but it was apparent that we had pushed on too rapidly with insufficient troops and few supplies. We were very tired and, having pushed the Turks back on to their line of communication, they had been able to detrain a division of fresh troops on the night of the 24th-25th at their railhead, Jaljulye, and rush them against our scanty numbers with every prospect of success. They carried out the counter-attack perfectly and with precision by means of some of their best reserve troops, the Anatolians."

WITH THE 6th ESSEX AT SH. MUWANNIS.

Now as to the fortunes of the two and a half companies of the 6th Essex upon the far side of the river. While the Battalion was resting on the previous afternoon at Summeil, the company commanders were ordered to ride down to the Nahr el 'Auja and get a general impression of the country in the vicinity of Sh. Muwannis. "A" and "B" Companies were then detailed to form a strong outpost line at the latter point, with two companies of the 1/4th Essex on the right at Kh. Hadra. When the New Zealanders had made good the passage of the river and the northern bank, the 1/6th Essex companies, under the command of Captain R. A. Hyrons, of a total strength of 300, with a machine gun section (four guns), crossed at Jerishe Mill and took up a position in a north-easterly direction, with their left on the high ground about 400 yards N.N.E. of Sh. Muwannis. "A" Company's right was about half a mile from the river, with a platoon in reserve, and "B" Company (Captain L. Clark) continued the line upon this flank to the river. Darkness had fallen some time before these dispositions were completed, but touch had been established with the 1/4th Essex. About 8 p.m. Captain C. W. Silverwood went out to ascertain the whereabouts of the New Zealanders and upon his return an hour and a half later he reported that a squadron (50 strong) was about three or four miles north of Sh. Muwannis on the left front. By 10.30 p.m. Captain Hyrons was in a position to report by telephone the dispositions to the C.O. 6th Essex and that it certainly looked as if an attack was expected from the north east. All was quiet throughout the night, however, but soon after dawn movement was noticed in front of the 1/4th Essex, and it soon became evident that the Turks contemplated an attack in force. What followed is well told in Captain Hyrons' own words: "We saw large numbers of hostile troops advancing and our artillery appeared to be doing deadly work amongst them. The range from us was too great to justify our machine guns opening at them. Communication by telephone with our Battalion headquarters, as soon as it was light, became almost impossible, large sections of the wire being cut out by civilian Arabs or hidden Turkish soldiers behind us, so a runner was sent informing Battalion headquarters of the situation. By about 8 o'clock the Turkish attack had developed. It was too heavy and the enemy far too numerous to be dealt with by the

two companies of the 1/4th Essex and the detachment of New Zealand Mounted Rifles, and it soon became apparent that they would have to retire or be outflanked and surrounded. They retired none too soon and it looked to me as if they were already surrounded; but this was not so. The position was now difficult, as the enemy were in possession of Khirbet Hadra, and, to make matters worse, movements of hostile troops were reported by Lieut. Womersley (in charge of the left flank platoon of "A" Company, 1/6th Essex, on the high ground north-east of Sheikh Muwannis) in a northerly direction, about 2,000 yards away. Our artillery opened fire on them. At about 9 a.m. communication by telephone with Battalion headquarters was temporarily established and Colonel Ewer informed me that a counter-attack on Khirbet Hadra had been ordered. "A" and "B" Companies of the 1/6th Essex and two companies of the 1/4th Essex were to be used. "A" and "B" Companies of the 1/6th Essex were to move from the east and the two companies of the 1/4th Essex from the Nahr el 'Auja behind Khirbet Hadra. This counter-attack was ordered to start at 11 a.m. I reported that there were large numbers of hostile troops to the north of Sheikh Muwannis, about 2,000 yards away, and Colonel Ewer told me we had sufficient artillery, together with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, to stop any attack developing in that direction, and that the counter-attack on Khirbet Hadra must proceed. I accordingly ordered the withdrawal of Lieut. Womersley's platoon from their position north-east of Sheikh Muwannis and deployed the other three platoons, facing Khirbet Hadra, with "B" Company on my right. While engaged in this a runner from Lieut. Womersley informed me that a force of the enemy, at least two thousand strong, was forming to the northward to attack his position; the climb up to Lieut. Womersley's platoon was almost precipitous and took nearly half an hour, and it was not surprising that the Turkish attack developed before my runner with the order to withdraw arrived there. The New Zealand Mounted Rifles were driven in and formed up on the left of Lieut. Womersley's platoon, which endeavoured to stem the attack, but the ground was very broken, with valleys running in every direction, and although they held their position until the Turks were within twenty yards of them, they would undoubtedly have been surrounded had they not retired. This they did. With the enemy in possession of Sheikh Muwannis and also Khirbet Hadra, it was manifest that the whole outpost position would have to be abandoned. Captain Clark, of "B" Company, 1/6th Essex, realizing that the counter-attack could not be proceeded with, and that the best possible place from which the river could be defended was the south, got his company over. I accordingly did the only thing possible and retired the Company to the weir at Jerishe Mill with small loss, considering the volume of artillery, rifle and machine gunfire directed on us. Once over the weir we found two companies of the 1/6th Essex,

with "B" Company in reserve, entrenched strongly, with the river in front of them. The Turks did not push their attack further and towards evening the 1/6th Essex were relieved by the 1/7th Essex and taken into reserve at Sarona."

Other details of this episode have been supplied by Captain C. W. Silverwood, who writes: The river was very full. On one side of the crossing place, a number of stepping stones, it was some ten to twelve feet deep and on the other a drop down a kind of mill race of about six feet into deepish water. The current was strong. We arrived at the place for crossing just as it was getting dark and when all men were over night had fallen, the typical dark night of those latitudes. "A" Company's outpost line was on the left and was taken up to the north of the track leading from the mill to the village. It covered about 1,200 yards and was composed of more or less equally spaced posts of platoons, with one platoon on high ground some 400-500 yards north-north-east of the village. Company headquarters were situated slightly in the rear of the line and at the approximate centre. Communication with all platoons was by runner, except that the platoon on the hill north of Sh. Muwannis was difficult to get at, so the field telephone was used. The Company was also in telephonic communication with Battalion headquarters on the south of the river. The line was settled and communication with all platoons and Battalion obtained about 8.30 p.m.. I then went back and got into touch with "B" Company, whose Company headquarters were on the river bank, close to an island. After seeing that runners knew the way well from "A" to "B" Companies, I went forward and at length found a patrol of the New Zealanders, whose commander informed me that the Turk was five miles north and going strong! I arranged with him that in the very unlikely case of attack he should fall back on our line and support us with his Hotchkiss guns. With the cheering news that the enemy were retreating as rapidly as possible, I visited the platoon on the hill and saw that they were in position and all was well. I got back to Company headquarters about 12.30 (midnight). After about two hours' sleep I was awakened by the signallers and informed that all telephonic communication between the platoon on the hill and also Battalion was impossible. It was soon discovered that the wires had been cut. They were mended and patrolled at intervals during the night, but, even so, at dawn they were again cut; in fact, pieces of about a foot long had been neatly taken out and thrown away. From then onwards telephone communication was hopeless, for as fast as the lines were repaired, they were cut and never was the culprit caught. Shortly after dawn a few leaden slugs fell in the area occupied by the Company headquarters, fired apparently from behind the post and from the direction south-east of Mulebbis. Palpably they were from an ancient smooth bore gun. Shortly after this gun and rifle fire was heard from our front and a little later "whizz-

bangs " were falling to our right rear and also around Kh. Hadra. Little could be seen of what was going on, as a belt of trees hid the main action from us. However, it was not very long before we could see that a serious attack was being made on the 1/4th Essex on our right front. Then large numbers of the enemy were observed approaching from the north-east and it gave us a certain amount of pleasure to see the Field Artillery shelling them and dropping their 18-pounder shells right among the masses of Turks who were coming over high ground on our front well out of rifle fire. About this time firing began from the platoon on our left and a runner came in to report that the Turk was advancing along the exposed flank (left) in large numbers and that the platoon could not possibly check the advance, but would withdraw behind the village at as late a time as was possible unless other orders were sent. The Turk was by that time getting within long range rifle fire from the main line of the Company and his numbers were estimated at some 4,000 to 5,000. There was no possible hope of holding up his advance, even for two minutes, and communication with the Battalion was hopeless, so after a consultation it was decided that the only thing to be done was to withdraw across the river with as few casualties as possible. There were about 600 to 700 yards to go before the bank of the river was reached and then it had to be crossed in single file. Swimming the stream was out of the question and those two or three men who attempted the feat were unfortunately drowned.

PART PLAYED BY THE MACHINE GUN COMPANY.

The report of the O.C. 161st Machine Gun Company (Captain W. H. Brooks) also throws much light upon what occurred on the northside of the river, both at Kh. Hadra and Sh. Muwannis. He states that No. 1 Section (Lieut. C. Needell) was detailed to accompany the 1/4th Essex and No. 3 Section (Lieut. R. Barklie) the 1/6th Essex. At about 1 p.m. on the 24th the New Zealand M.R. crossed the River 'Auja, capturing Sh. Muwannis and Kh. Hadra and clearing the Turks back from the northern bank of the river. No. 1 Section afforded a certain amount of covering fire from Bullin Hill, but without much effect owing to the long range. Later, when the section was having a meal, orders came from the 1/4th Essex to send a sub-section (two guns) to Kh. Hadra, where a company of the 1/4th Essex had already been sent. The officer in charge of the section (Lieut. Clive Needell) recalls that he tossed up with his sub-section officer, Lieut. Tallon, as to which sub-section should go and that he (Lieut. Needell) lost the toss. "It is curious sometimes what a lot depends on the spin of a coin," he added, and the reader of the sub-section's subsequent trials and adventures will cordially agree. The sub-section moved off quickly, with the gun equipment on seven pack mules and two camels to carry the spare water and reserve ammunition. They crossed the river by the mill bridge, which had been smashed, but had been

replaced by wooden planking strong enough to bear a camel. When Kh. Hadra was reached darkness had fallen, so reconnaissance of the position was impossible. Accordingly, after discussion with O.C. "B" Company of the 1/4th Essex, the guns were mounted one on each side of the hill, the mules being picketed in the rear with the Lewis gun mules. It was understood that the New Zealand M.R. were a considerable distance in front and the general impression was that everything would be quiet, as the Turks had gone right back. About 3 a.m. on the 25th and again about 4 a.m., hostile rifle fire was heard, which increased considerably between 4.30 and 5.30 a.m. The garrison on Kh. Hadra heard a number of hand grenades bursting, which indicated close fighting, and then in the darkness the men of the Mounted Rifles could be observed withdrawing. As soon as dawn broke the enemy were seen in force on the ridge which lay nearly half a mile in front and the machine guns were immediately opened upon them so as to reduce the severity of the British casualties by keeping down the enemy's fire. Within half an hour one gun team had been practically wiped out by artillery fire. No effective reply could be made, for at this stage there was no artillery support. About 6.30 a.m. the Machine Gun Officer decided to send his pack mules across the river to avoid losing them. About this time the Turkish infantry worked round the flanks until the dwindling company were being enfiladed from both sides. About 8 a.m. there was very heavy and concentrated artillery fire, after which the enemy attacked in several waves, just as the first British shells came over, but it was too late. The enemy were in such numbers that the forty or fifty survivors—New Zealanders, Essex and machine gunners—could not stop them. Both the machine guns and the infantry continued to fire until the enemy were right upon them and then they were forced to retire, having to leave the machine guns behind, after removing the fusee springs and locks. "We had to run for it," wrote the Machine Gun officer, "but it speaks wonders for the discipline of the troops when I mention that although Kh. Hadra is only about 800 yards from the river, we formed a line about 200 to 300 yards north of the water. I remember getting hold of a Lewis gun and turning it on to some Turks, who were busy dismounting one of the machine guns. It was our intention to counter-attack if we got the opportunity, but shortly afterwards we had a message ordering us to withdraw to the south side of the river, so gradually we withdrew. Our only means of crossing the river was by the bridge and it has always been a matter of wonder to me that the Turks allowed any of us to get across at this spot, but having turned us off Kh. Hadra, they seemed for the moment satisfied." The casualties were heavy and, as an illustration, the machine gun sub-section had practically ceased to exist. Of the officer and 15 other ranks who crossed the river no fewer than nine of the latter were killed or died of wounds, one of whom died as a prisoner in the hands of the Turks,

whilst four were wounded. There only remained fit for duty one sergeant and a batman. The behaviour of all ranks was splendid. When all the men of his gun team had become casualties, Private Corby kept his gun firing in face of heavy bombardment. Though wounded, he continued his resistance until the enemy were practically on the parapet. Private Horsnel was twice wounded, yet refused to leave his gun. So the number of gallant incidents could be multiplied tenfold. That evening the remnant of the sub-section returned to Sarona in reserve.

No. 3 section of the 161st Machine Gun Company went with "B" and "A" companies of the 1/6th Essex which took up an outpost line in and about Sheikh Muwannis. Two machine guns were placed north and east of the village and of two others one was on the north side of the river and the other on the south side. The first of the two former fired continuously at the enemy when he made his final attack upon Kh. Hadra about 8 a.m. When the Turks, from the north, extended the offensive towards Sh. Muwannis, this gun fired first at a range of 2,000 yards and maintained it at a decreasing range down to 300 yards, by which time the infantry had withdrawn from the village and the ammunition had been almost entirely expended. The enemy, too, had worked round on the west of Sheikh Muwannis and the gun and team had hastily to retire. The gun sited on the track 500 yards east of the village opened fire upon the Turks issuing from Khirbet Hadra until the enemy pressure became so intense that it had to be withdrawn. It was found impossible to get the gun across the river, nor the gun which had been placed to the north of the village. Men had been sent for ammunition and the remainder had to get across the river as best they could under heavy fire and had to leave their guns in marked spots, after the fusee springs and boxes, with the locks, had been removed. The third gun across the river covered the withdrawal of the infantry and was then safely taken to the south bank. The reason for the success of the attack was given as being due to the enemy occupying the western flank of the village. No machine guns had been put there because the duty of the 1/6th Essex was confined to the north and north-eastern sides. This penetration of the western flank made Sh. Muwannis untenable. As a result of this action, the officer commanding the Machine Gun Company urged that it would be advisable for machine guns, when defending isolated posts, to take up positions on the flanks with an escort, away from the posts, as by so doing they tended to escape the shelling and in enfilade they could bring effective fire along the front of the post and thus afford infantry, temporarily driven out, an opportunity to rally and counter-attack.

CAPTURED SERGEANT'S EXPERIENCES.

When the Turks made their attack on the outlying companies some of the men on outpost duty were surrounded and made prisoner. Among them was Sergeant W. White, of Ilford (1/4th

Essex), who was captured whilst trying to find his way back to the river. A Turkish officer was near by and that circumstance no doubt prevented all his possessions being taken. An interpreter noted his rank and soon White and his comrade were seated on the ground sharing the officer's evening meal, which consisted of white bread and what appeared to be chicken. The sergeant was afterwards allowed to visit his wounded comrades and render such help as was possible. Whilst filling some water bottles for them, a Turkish soldier snatched one of them out of his hand and the escort (two armed Turks) without ceremony kicked the interloper in the stomach and gave it to White, motioning him to continue the good work. The Sergeant had many interesting experiences subsequently. "The main idea of the Turkish rank and file was loot, even in some instances to wearing entire uniforms taken from the dead. My impression of the officers was that they were a class apart from the men. Their discipline in the field was enforced by a bullet and disobedience of an order in the firing line was to court instant death. There seemed to be little giving of orders in case of an emergency. The morning following my capture one of our 'planes came over and entirely of their own will every man Jack of them took pot shots, which gave us the feeling of being in the midst of a miniature battle until the 'plane flew off again. The field rations of the rank and file seemed to be black bread, or biscuits, and water. The British Tommy's bill of fare would have been a restaurant menu to them. The higher officers were mostly Germans. They made a poor show with their artillery, where it was not composed of Germans or Austrians, and their transport mostly consisted of tiny carts, so small that two of them could be lifted bodily off the road when in the way. Their ambulances were fearfully and wonderfully made and not one Red Crescent train did I see. During the three days' journey to Damascus their wounded were lying in open trucks, whilst the prisoners had a closed carriage. They had no medicines, hardly any dressings and no anaesthetics. If a Turk flinched whilst having his wounds dressed he was promptly smacked in the face. When one of the men was being reprimanded for a military offence, the speech was often emphasized by several slaps on the face. On one occasion at Aleppo I saw a punishment parade, when the guilty party was placed face downwards on the ground and held by the feet and head. Two men were on duty on each side with big sticks and when a call was sounded by trumpeters the sticks ascended and then descended upon his body. There was rhythm in the movement and at every stroke the Turks would shout."

4th The 1/4th relieved the New Zealand Mounted Rifles on November 24th in a position to the south of Nahr el 'Auja, and moved two companies—"B" Company (Captain Carhart) and "C" Company (Captain Fanshawe)—across the river to support the Rifles in the capture of a position on the north side of the river, which they commenced consolidating. The two

companies were transferred to Khirbet Hadra at 10.30 p.m. in support of the advanced posts of the New Zealanders. Battalion headquarters and the other two companies remained on the south side of the river. Early in the morning strong enemy attacks drove in the advanced posts and with heavy shelling forced the two companies across the river, where they withdrew to their original position south of the 'Auja. During the fight Captain Fanshawe was hit and Captain Carhart assumed control. He was also shot twice in the shoulder and gallantly tried to carry on, but was persuaded to hand over to Captain P. W. Scott and report to headquarters. Plucky rescue work was done by C.S.M. Fish ("C" Company), who brought a number of wounded across the river by way of Jerishe Mill. A mortally wounded officer was ferried over on a stretcher supported by logs of timber from the ruins of the millhouse under heavy machine gun fire. The 1/4th were relieved by the 1/5th Essex and moved into bivouac at Sarona. Five officers and 97 other ranks were wounded in this operation and 2nd Lieut. E. M. Saunders died of his wounds in the C.C.S. on December 4th following. Forty-five of the men cut off at Kh. Hadra were taken prisoner.

6th On November 24th the 1/6th Essex took over an outpost line Nahr el Baride inclusive to the sea from the Canterbury Mounted Rifles, the relief being completed by 1 p.m. "D" Company were on the right, "C" on the left and "A" and "B" in reserve. At 1.40 p.m. they assisted the New Zealand Mounted Rifles by demonstrating against Sheikh Muwannis and at 5 p.m. "B" and "A" Companies were moved across the Nahr el 'Auja by way of the weir near the mill, "A" Company leaving an officer and 25 other ranks at the mill for bridging purposes. The two companies took up a position in and covering Sheikh Muwannis, the other companies remaining on the south side of the river. Heavy tools, blankets, bivouac sheets and camp kettles were sent across the river to the two forward companies. At 7 o'clock the next morning mounted troops reported to the companies at Sheikh Muwannis that a column of Turks, about 500 strong, were advancing along the coast. Prompt steps were taken to secure the sea ford, for a platoon of "C" Company was sent from the south of the river to hold a position 180 yards north of the ford, another platoon being in support 50 yards to the south of the river. The remaining platoons of "C" Company were retained on the original line. The situation becoming more menacing owing to the pressure of the enemy and the increasing artillery fire, "D" Company (less two platoons) were sent from the centre of the line to the mill to cover the crossing there, the two remaining platoons holding the line originally occupied by the Company the night before. Whilst this movement was taking place Battalion headquarters personnel (less the orderly room staff, signallers and runners), under 2nd Lieut. C. Rowlands, temporarily held the vacated portion of the line. The rest of "C" Company were later transferred to a position 200 yards

south of the sea ford. At 11 a.m. the enemy's strong attack from north, north-east and north-west caused the companies north of the 'Auja to withdraw to the south side, where they reinforced "D" Company by the mill. Half an hour later Battalion headquarters were withdrawn to a point 500 yards south-west of their original position. At 3 p.m. "A" Company was ordered into battalion reserve and at 4.30 p.m. the 1/7th Essex relieved the Battalion, which then moved by companies to the vicinity of Sarona. The casualties were 12 other ranks killed, two officers and 21 other ranks wounded, a total of 35.

WITH THE 5th AND 7th ESSEX.

The 1/5th and 1/7th Essex marched from the bivouac at 8 a.m. on November 25th. The column was commanded by Lieut.-Colonel H. G. Wilmer (1/7th Essex) and orders were to rejoin the Brigade at Selme, some five miles east of Jaffa. The expectation was that a rest would be called for the winter season, but the battalions had barely covered half the distance when an order was received that, as the 1/4th and 1/6th were in action, the column had to move to Sarona, a German colony five miles north-east of Jaffa. At this pleasant village wounded men of the other Battalions were seen, with some of the Anzacs, who spoke of the critical situation which had developed. The 1/5th were ordered to relieve the 1/4th Essex on the right, south of the River 'Auja, and facing north and north-east, from whence the most menacing Turkish pressure had come. The change over was effected at dusk and completed at 8 p.m. Captain Mumford, of the 1/7th, rode in advance of the Battalion to find Brigade headquarters, and in describing it, he says, "It isn't often one rides straight into the front line of a battle. I was ordered to go ahead and had an awful harum scarum time through some orange groves. All limbers and horses chock-a-block on the roads and withdrawing. I must have ridden 25 miles, but I found Brigade hidden in Sarona, a lovely village. It was a wonderful sight seeing Sh. Muwannis shelled from the Selme hills, but things seemed pretty bad." However, notwithstanding some sniping, the Battalion was safely posted, with headquarters in an orange house. The trenches were scrappy and Sh. Muwannis, on the other side of the Auja, overlooked everything. On November 27th a most unusual thing happened. A battery of horse artillery dug in behind the Battalion, when suddenly the Turks put a barrage down on top of them. The guns limbered up and galloped out of action—"a wonderful sight." Apparently the position was given away by spies in the village.

EXCITING EPISODES.

Two exciting episodes were connected with the holding of the line by these two battalions. The first concerns the 1/5th Essex, which, as dusk fell on November 25th, relieved the 1/4th Essex and were in position by 8 p.m., with Portway's company on the right, in which was a commanding hill, known later as Portway

Hill, which gave observation of the valley of the 'Auja. This hill is referred to elsewhere as Bulfin Hill (Z30). It was the highest land in the neighbourhood and had a wonderful view, much patronized by gunner officers. The infantry were not quite so appreciative, for, wrote one, "They came with maps and stood on top to admire the landscape. When they left the Turks started to shell it, but we had to stay. When the Turks captured Mulebbis they were well behind it, but did not take the trouble to shell us off." Colvin's company was in the centre, well forward, covering the approaches to the mill and bridge, whilst Franklin's Company was on the left, in touch with the 1/7th Essex. The fourth company was in reserve. From the right company a patrol went as far as a ford three miles up the river in endeavour to get touch with a standing patrol of the Australian Light Horse, which was reported to be there, but which they could not find. They were unable to locate it when another patrol went out again the next evening. November 26th was spent in consolidation and November 27th was a day of anxiety, for both hostile artillery and infantry were active. From a sudden influx of a mob of refugees on the right about 9 a.m. it was learnt that the Turks had entered Mulebbis and were still in movement. The enemy shelling did little damage, save that headquarters of "C" Company sustained some casualties by a stray shell. Stiff fighting was proceeding to the right, where Hill 265 was retaken, and thus much uneasiness was removed, which had caused the 1/6th Essex to be brought up from Sarona, in support of the 1/5th. "This was one of the few occasions," wrote Captain Finn, "during the war when it really appeared that we should have to retreat. When we received news of the fall of Mulebbis, the largest Jewish colony in Palestine, there ensued the intense shelling which usually precedes an attack. From Portway Hill, where 'B' Company was, we received news of fighting on our right rear, so everyone 'stood to' and baggage was packed preparatory to a move if such was ordered. However, Anzac and artillery activity caused an improvement in the situation. In the midst of the greatest excitement, when anticipating a retirement, our new Church of England Chaplain (Rev. H. C. Marriott, C.F.) arrived and reported. This was just the wrong moment, and I fear he did not receive a very cheerful welcome. However, he stayed with us until long after the Armistice and was very popular." The next morning (November 28th) a party of 200 Turks were identified as having established themselves on the south side of the river near to the mill and the bridge. A reconnaissance decided the commanding officer to send a raiding party against them. It was arranged that it should move across the open marshy ground, well away to the right, and then when near the river bank, work back in order to attack the Turk on his left flank. It was hoped that this movement would give the necessary element of surprise, also that by attacking on the left

the enemy would be driven on to the British barrage. This was directed upon the ford, which was the only means of retreat. The hostile fire from the north bank, it was expected, would also be restricted unless the Turk was willing to sacrifice his own men. All these three suppositions proved correct. Lieut. C. F. J. Keeling, who had served in France and was conversant with trench warfare, was chosen to lead the operation with 40 N.C.O.'s and men from "A" and "C" Companies. At 8 p.m. they attacked and soon there was unmistakable evidence, by reason of the firing and the shouting, that they were actively engaged with the Turks. This noise was added to almost immediately by the fire of a field battery, which barraged the ford to prevent the Turks receiving reinforcements from the other bank and catch those who were retreating. Then the guns lifted to the higher bank to cover the raiders' withdrawal. This barrage was skilfully conducted and greatly facilitated the success of the enterprise, which resulted in the eviction of 150 Turks with their machine guns. They were surprised in their sleep. Many were killed by bomb and bayonet and eight were taken prisoner, with a machine gun. Two of the latter were also disabled. The rest of the Turks dispersed across the river, where many were again caught by the barrage. The official estimate of the enemy loss was 23. As the party withdrew the Turks retaliated with machine gunfire, but Keeling, returning the way he came, reported surprisingly small loss. The casualties were seven killed, including three valuable N.C.O.'s, Sergeant Upchurch ("A" Company) and Lance-Corporals Newman and Richardson. Two wounded men were brought back. The Battalion received the congratulations of the G.O.C.A. and N.Z. Corps next morning, under whose direction it was then serving. Lieut. Keeling was awarded the Military Cross and Sergeant Piper ("C" Company) and Private Cook ("A" Company) were also given the Military Medal—all well-earned decorations.

The 1/7th Essex relieved the 1/6th Essex on the evening of November 25th, taking over the line from the village of Jerishe to the sea. This consisted merely of parties of men in gullies, wadis and orange groves, in commanding positions on the south bank of the River Auja. "Of the forced march from Ramle to Sarona earlier in the day, one incident remains clearly in my mind," wrote Lieut. R. V. Hosking. "Having had many thirsty marches during the preceding weeks and not knowing whither we were bound, we all bought as many oranges as we could carry. I had a dozen in my pack and some more in my pockets and during the one brief halt was able to eat only one. On arrival we rested for about half an hour in an orange grove, where thousands of the most juicy oranges waited to be picked. I relieved my aching shoulders of the unnecessary weight and noticed others doing likewise whilst giving vent to their wrath. To return to the 'Auja, the positions we had taken over had necessarily been hastily chosen by the 1/4th and 1/6th, who had

been forced to withdraw to the south bank of the river that very morning. Some positions close to the river were occupied that night and with two platoons of "D" Company I moved forward to the crossing at Jerishe and dug in close to the bank. Working parties of the enemy could be plainly heard moving about and digging on the opposite bank, but we were not molested. At dawn we moved into an adjacent orange grove, as the trench was not yet sufficiently deep to occupy in daylight. At about 9 a.m. I received the following message from my company commander (Captain Young): 'Urgent. Immediately on receipt, take a patrol of yourself, one N.C.O. and 15 men, cross river at ford to find out if there are any enemy forces between Sheikh Muwannis and river and, if so, what his dispositions and forces are. Work with path running S of Sheikh Muwannis on your left and a line due north of mill on your right. Take care not to be cut off from the ford. If possible, send two men to crawl up to village to find if it is held. Don't go yourself and don't get involved in a fight. Chivers and 10 O.R.'s will replace you, but don't wait for him. Information required for C.-in-C. by 10.30 a.m.' The writer of that message was an optimist. The country north of the river was a barren plain stretching away flat for about half a mile, then gradually rising to a ridge about half a mile farther on. Sheikh Muwannis stood on the crest of this ridge and commanded the country southwards for miles. Taking this into consideration and the fact that a part of the Brigade had been driven back the previous day and also that working parties had been heard during the night, the possibility of reaching Sheikh Muwannis in broad daylight seemed very remote. I pushed off with my patrol as soon as possible and, after passing through the village, made for the ford which had been pointed out to me earlier in the morning by a man dressed in goat-skins like a native. This man, by the way, had been most friendly. He offered information about the enemy, made cigarettes, which I declined with thanks, and even offered to carry me across the ford on his back, which I am pleased I also declined. How well meant his intentions were I found out later. As the party was unwieldy for a daylight patrol, I left eight men at the ford, with instructions what to do in the event of the patrol needing assistance. The ford (which I have illustrated) ran from the mill at Jerishe to a small island in mid-stream and from there the northern bank was a bridge supported on boats. For a distance of about 100 yards from the bank the grass grew fairly long and through this we crept until, upon reaching more sparsely covered ground, Sergeant Lloyd and I went forward alone after telling the patrol to follow if we drew no fire. We had gone about another 100 yards when suddenly rifle firing burst out from our rear at close range. Thinking it was our patrol, Lloyd and I went back to join them. We found them in a cutting leading up to the bank from the bridge. They had wisely gone back to avoid being cut off, as they were being fired on from the right rear. On going

back half-way across the bridge to get a view of the bank, I was greeted by rapid fire and on glancing along the bank to the right saw a large party of Turks not more than a hundred yards from my patrol. I lost no time in joining the patrol again and was informed by Lloyd that he had noticed another enemy party moving in the grass on the other side of us. To resume patrol was impossible, but to get back to our lines seemed even more so, as the whole of the crossing was in view of the enemy. The men I had left at the ford had now got behind the mill house, but where I could see them. They proved invaluable to me, as they were able to give warning of any movements of the enemy. We formed a semi-circle facing the enemy's front, but, owing to the long grass and rushes near the bank, were unable to see more than a few yards ahead. Attracting the attention of the men by the mill, I made signs for them to bring fire to bear on the Turks, if possible. Two men then made a dash into the mill house and, through crevices in the stonework, started firing. They got a warm reception. The Turks plastered the walls with lead and, as I learned afterwards, the walls were by no means bullet-proof. The other men fired occasionally from behind huts, which certainly made the enemy careful about exposing himself. The morning wore on and Lloyd and I did some hard thinking, but the only solution that seemed to have any chance of success was to crawl forward and bomb the enemy's position. We had no grenades with us, as they were particularly scarce at that time, so I signalled back to the mill for a man to go back for some and, on returning, to get as close as possible and throw them to us across the river. After dodging from hut to hut and crawling along ditches, this man reached our lines safely. The heat of the sun, plus having had no sleep the previous night, caused some of the men to get drowsy early in the afternoon, with the following result. I was looking for the man to return with the bombs when I saw one of the party at the ford suddenly jump up, wave his arms about frantically and point beyond us. Lloyd and I jumped up immediately and beheld a Turk within about twenty yards, apparently just preparing to throw a bomb. Lloyd fired his rifle from the hip and, at the same instant, I fired my revolver. 'Johnny' doubled up and fell down, and we saw no further movement from that direction. The patrol was certainly more alert after that incident. A little later a movement in the village attracted my attention and I saw, to my amazement, my native friend of the early morning dodge to the side of a hut opposite the party of Turks who had first fired on us. He made several signs to them and pointed in our direction, but disappeared before we could fire at him. Time went on and still no sign of the man with bombs. We were getting bored with the inaction and one man suggested that he should make a dash across the bridge to see if the Turks were still covering it. I let him go and he nearly reached the island before a shot was fired. Shots came fast from both sides of us then, but the lad reached the lee side of the island

safely and remained there some time before making the dash across the ford. During the afternoon, unknown to me, of course, the C.O., with the Brigade Major, viewed the situation from a high hill near "D" Company's headquarters and decided on a line of action. Lieut. Chivers made a splendid effort to fire on the Turks with a Lewis gun. He crawled through the village and commenced firing, but the gun jammed hopelessly and he had to beat a hasty retreat. About 4 p.m. the man who had gone for bombs appeared with a message. As it was impossible to get the message over to us, he made me understand by signs that at five o'clock the artillery and machine guns would open fire on the northern bank and that we were to make a bolt for it as soon as the first gun went. The sun went down about a quarter to five and in the short twilight we prepared for the dash back. Exactly at five o'clock the first shell came screaming towards us, and, springing up, we dashed across the bridge in a body. Salvoes of shells came over and a rain of machine gun bullets sang overhead. This surprise for the Turks undoubtedly saved us, as we had almost reached the island before they saw us. They then fired rapidly but wildly, so that with the exception of a drenching at the ford and a glancing wound which I received on the knee, we all reached our lines safely. I would like to add that two days later, whilst spotting with one of my snipers, I saw my 'friend' of the goatskins crawling away from an enemy post on the northern bank. After pointing him out to the sniper his activities abruptly and finally ceased."

THE REPLY.

Such a challenge as the Turkish check on the 'Auja could not remain unheeded, but for the moment there was much happening on the British right, where the enemy resistance was successfully countered after hard fighting. On Sunday, December 9th, Jerusalem was surrendered to the advance guard of the 60th Division and Sir Edmund Allenby made his official entry two days later. Thus securely based, the British command re-directed attention to the left and as Christmas approached the XXI Corps were busily occupied in preparations to drive the Turks northward and to occupy the Rantye-Jilil line. The first essential was to cross the 'Auja, for the Turkish hold upon the hills to the north of the river and of Bald Hill and Mulebbis to the south and south-east gave them excellent observation of Jaffa and thus made its use dangerous for shipping. The scheme of operations involved a change of front for the 54th Division. The 52nd (Lowland) Division were entrusted with the forcing of the river. When that feat was accomplished the 54th, on the right, were to move in unison against Bald Hill. The flooded river was successfully negotiated on the moonlit evening of December 20th. First a small covering force near the sea ford was taken across upon rafts made from canvas water tanks, followed by the 157th Brigade at the ford. The 156th

Brigade crossed by a pair of bridges at a point south-west of Muwannis and the 155th by similar means at a point about 1,200 yards east of Jerishe Mill. The making of these rafts and bridges in the orange groves at Saron and their transport and concealment from Turkish observation was a noteworthy feat of war. By 6 a.m. on December 21st all their objectives had been taken by the 52nd Division. During that day the bridges were strengthened and others were commenced to accommodate the constant passage of cavalry, divisional artillery and transport. The 54th Division, on the right, also became active. Yafa Hill, an outpost, was taken by a company of the 1/5th Bedfords, 162nd Brigade, and on the night of December 21st-22nd the 1/11th Londons, 162nd Brigade, seized a small hill 350 yards east of Bald Hill, from which fire could be opened upon the trenches of the latter stronghold. There were fierce counter-attacks, which were beaten off, during which Lance-Corporal J. A. Christie, of the Londons, won the Victoria Cross for repulsing one bombing party single-handed. In the early morning light the enemy was seen to be in retreat and when the divisional advance began at 8 a.m. there was only feeble opposition. The 162nd Brigade occupied a line a mile north-east of Et Tire, through Wilhelma Station, to Fajja, the 161st Brigade thence being responsible until the Auja was reached at Ferrihkiye. The Turks retired rapidly, only to react again early on December 27th, with fresh troops, when they tried to retake Jerusalem and sustained a heavy defeat. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force thus stood upon the threshold of the eventful year of 1918 as an army which "in nine weeks had advanced its front some sixty miles and had fought over sandy desert, open plains, marsh and mountains and with a climate varying from a Khamsin to a snowstorm." The British line commenced five miles east of Jerusalem, went northwards to Beitin, then west to Niflin and thence north-west to the sea coast near Arsuf, ten miles north of Jaffa.

The 161st Brigade suffered considerably from sickness from the middle of November to the end of December, the chief complaint being a form of influenza with high temperature brought on by the constant exposure to bad weather. Rain fell practically the whole time the Brigade was bivouacked at Selme. The 1/6th and 1/7th Essex were chiefly affected. The fighting in the third battle of Gaza had substantially reduced the personnel, so that sickness smote the 161st with added severity. At the end of October the Brigade had a strength of 136 officers and 3,983 other ranks and by the end of November the total had been reduced to 74 officers and 2,639 other ranks. Of these eight officers and 156 other ranks had been killed and 31 officers and 744 other ranks wounded, whilst three officers and 195 other ranks were reported missing, some of whom were later ascertained to be killed. On the other hand, 234 Turks had been captured. The strength on December 27th was 88 officers and 2,603 other ranks. The Battalion returns, where preserved, also support the record of the Brigade. On November 1st the 1/5th Essex had

a strength of 25 officers and 925 other ranks, which at the end of the month had sunk to 16 officers and 589 other ranks. Two officers and 47 other ranks had been killed, whilst nine and 196 respectively had been wounded. Fourteen men were missing, whilst four officers and 102 other ranks had reported sick. The 1/7th Essex had lost six officers killed, with 61 other ranks, whilst six officers and 177 other ranks were wounded, there also being 31 missing. The strength in December was 24 officers and 619 other ranks, which was not maintained, for on New Year Day, 1918, there were 19 officers and 601 other ranks, there being no fewer than six officers and 176 other ranks in hospital. The Battalion commander (Lieut.-Colonel H. G. Wilmer) commented that during the first part of December the health of the troops was fairly good, but it improved markedly upon the occupation of billets.

HARD MARCHING.

The Brigade was alert and active during the time it remained upon 'Auja front. The men were kept busy entrenching and had to endure persistent shelling. The rest periods in Sarona were much appreciated, for it was a great relief to march away from narrow trenches and a position open to enemy observation, where movement had to be restricted to the night hours. The English appearance of Sarona was pleasing and one officer relates how he enjoyed the perfume of the mimosa as he rode to the house of a German professor, which was to be the headquarters billet. He added, "Two things connected with the stay remain in my mind. The first was the good supply of wine. There was a large wine distillery which supplied many parts of Europe and America. Owing to the internment of the German owners the factory was not being worked and supplies of wine were collected in two gallon cans for use in the officers' mess, so that we had plenty to drink. The second memory is of 'stand-to.' This was from one hour before dawn to one hour afterwards. Now 'stand-to' in the trenches is a miserable time, but there you are wearing equipment and able to concern yourself about various trench duties. But to have to 'stand-to' when behind the line and in rest billets was really trying. One day I went to Jaffa and in the European quarter there was a smart hair dressing establishment, which was promptly patronized. The barber said, 'I am a Jew—a Pole,' and surprised me by relating that he had worked as a barber in the Franco-British Exhibition at the White City. I think the German women folk who were left at Sarona would testify that the Essex troops behaved splendidly while in their town. The East Anglian R.A.M.C. attended to the women and children who required treatment. One Sunday Padre Johnson ('Massa' Johnson, of the 1/4th Essex) conducted a service in the local church, which was attended by the troops and German women and children. As the Padre spoke German, his short address was given in both languages. We had been so

happy in Sarona that we were grieved when the time came to leave it. The Brigade was to concentrate at Yazur, but the battalions marched separately. During our journey it rained as it only can rain in places like Palestine. The roads, never too good, were almost impassable in places and it was impossible to cross the open country, as could often be done. Detours had to be made and several times we were in doubt whether we were going in the right direction. By the time we reached Yazur we were a sodden, miserable crowd." The Brigade marched to Lydda on December 10th, which was reached at 9 a.m., the bivouac being near the station. This journey left an indelible impression upon an Essex officer, who thus described it : " Anyone who desires to choose a miserable time for beginning a march should fix 2 a.m., the hour at which we began this move. It was pitch dark and one had to negotiate ditches, hedges, etc., get everyone on the march in order and proceed as part of the Brigade. Added to this, the weather was rather cold. At about 8 a.m. we left the Jaffa-Jerusalem road and moved along tracks in the olive groves which surround Lydda. Eventually the Brigade bivouacked in these groves hard by the old Turkish railway, alongside which were enormous stacks of cut timber, which were there for use as engine fuel. The Turks had long before run out of coal. This wood was very useful during our stay, as the nights were bitterly cold. The men had begun their march up from Gaza in shorts and they were without overcoats. Had it not been for those wood fires, kept going all night, severe sickness might have set in."

The Essex men were in support of the 162nd Brigade in a successful advance of December 15th on Et Tire, and then concentrated at Safriye. When near their destination both the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions had to accelerate the rate of march owing to the near approach of daylight or the movement would have been visible to the enemy and given them an inkling of the further offensive which was in preparation. The move to Selme in the early morning of December 18th was for the first part along the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, but when the Brigade later struck across country the going was very heavy owing to the soddened soil. All ranks were rather tired of marching, of which they had had an enormous amount since November 2nd. The 1/5th Essex were moving in company with the 1/7th and owing to a mistake on the part of the officer who was sent earlier in the day to find the place given in the map reference and hit on the wrong cross-roads, the Battalion had to increase its rate of marching and reduce the time for halts until the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex had been caught up. It appeared to all ranks as if the Essex Brigade would spend Christmas fighting, for once again they had only arrived at a new spot to make arrangements for another engagement. Officers' conferences were held, at which full details of the plan of operations were given, whilst parties of officers also went up to the front line to reconnoitre the objectives from the artillery observation posts.

ENTRY INTO MULEBBIS.

At 8 a.m. on December 22nd the 1/6th and 1/7th Essex advanced and entered Mulebbis, passing through and taking up positions beyond the town. The 1/5th Essex were in support. "The battle was very much like a training field day in England," was the opinion of an Essex officer, "in that we went forward without opposition. However, we had to remain alert lest any Turks were in hiding anywhere. As soon as it was obvious that the enemy had retired, the whole Brigade moved forward. The 1/5th Essex received orders to billet in Mulebbis and Colonel Gibbons and his adjutant (Captain Finn) rode to the main street and halted by the post office opposite the wooden bandstand. They got into touch with the mayor, who lived in quite the largest house in the place. Negotiations were at first conducted in French, but were soon made easier by the arrival of a man who spoke English. He was some sort of official, who wore a uniform rather like that of an English municipal tram conductor. The mayor and his colleagues were very polite and said they would do everything to assist the billeting of the troops, but they were rather slow in making a move. Eventually some of them were observed at a top window looking through field glasses to see how far the enemy had gone. They apparently had no desire to be energetic on our behalf until assured that the enemy had really left. Once they were convinced, billeting was rapidly arranged. I was surprised to find that many of the Jews living in this isolated village had been in America and Europe. On the second day of our stay a very pretty girl came into the orderly room to know if we could help her with transport to Jaffa. She was very smartly dressed, although a little behind the fashion, and this, it transpired, was because she had been in Paris in early 1914. The inhabitants of Mulebbis were allowed to carry on their normal activities with as little interference as possible. The enemy's lines were some miles away and there appeared to be little risk of spying and communication with them. A few days after our going into the line we were surprised to hear a report and see a rocket go up in the gardens in front of Battalion headquarters. I went over and found that two Jewish inhabitants had annexed a pile of signal rockets and had sent one up. We assumed that it was an accident, but moved the rockets to headquarters. Being unable to interpret the wording, Sergeant Frisby (orderly room sergeant of the 1/5th Essex), who was the Battalion's interpreter, examined them and reported that the rockets were Russian; possibly they had been captured earlier in the war. This was the wet season in Palestine, but fortunately it was not continuous. It rained, as a rule, for about two days as though we were in for another flood, then the next two days would be brilliantly sunny and the ground would begin to dry rapidly. Then another two or three days' rain would make us feel miserable again. However, a sunny spell would be sure to follow."

- 4th The story for the end of November and the month of December of the Battalions of the Brigade is short but interesting, for it included, as noted above, the almost bloodless capture of Mulebbis from the Turks. The 1/4th Essex were in bivouac at Sarona from the time of their relief by the 1/5th Essex on November 25th until December 3rd, when they, in turn, relieved the 1/5th Essex, suffering two casualties in so doing. One company of the outgoing Battalion remained with the 1/4th. Fire of all arms was endured for the next few days. "B" Company, on Z30, were persistently shelled and a direct hit was made on the Company cookhouse. Two stretcher bearers were killed and several others severely injured. On December 8th the Battalion was relieved by the 5th K.O.S.B. and the 7th H.L.I., of the 52nd Division, who were taking over the coastal sector. Upon this day nineteen men left for the R.F.C. base depot upon transfer to that branch of the service. The next day, in pouring rain, the Battalion marched to Yazur and the day after (December 10th) arrived at Lydda, which was to become so familiar to the Brigade in subsequent months. This ancient town, which was known as Ludd, derives its fame as the traditional burying place of St. George, the patron saint of England. For the next few days there was training and the passage of men in and out of hospital, whilst drafts of one officer and 109 other ranks were welcomed. The Battalion left Lydda on December 17th and marched to Beit Dejan, moving next day to Selme by an early morning march. The Battalion relieved the 5th K.O.S.B. along the 'Auja and on the 22nd three companies, with Battalion headquarters, proceeded to rejoin the Brigade for the attack on Mulebbis, the remaining company acting as flank guard along the 'Auja on the left of the troops. "B" Company occupied the bridge and mill near Ferrikhiye, whilst the rest of the Battalion followed the advance of the 1/6th Essex. The next day (December 23rd) the Battalion was relieved by the 1/6th Essex and went into Brigade reserve at Mulebbis, on which day also a draft of 16 joined, and for the next three days there was an influx of officers and men from hospital to the total of nearly one hundred. A complete survey and reconnaissance by "B" Company was undertaken on December 27th of the river 'Auja from Ferrikhiye to El Mirr for the purpose of providing correct map detail. On December 30th the 1/6th Essex were relieved and the 1/4th were holding the line when the New Year dawned.
- 5th The 1/5th Essex were in the trenches south of the 'Auja on December 1st, having three companies in front and one in reserve. They were heavily shelled on the night of the 2nd, but suffered no casualties, and on the 4th they moved into Sarona, a welcome change. The Battalion relieved the New Zealand M.R. as guard of Jaffa Town Hall, the Colonials being replaced by Lieut. B. Archer and a detachment of 40 other ranks. A very thorough search for arms had been made in Jaffa and neighbourhood and the guard had a great collection to mind.

Many souvenirs eventually found their way to the 5th Essex. On December 8th the Battalion was relieved by the reserve unit of the 156th Brigade and marched to Yazur. The 1/5th Essex arrived at Lydda on December 10th and left on December 13th in relief of the 5th Norfolks. They took over the line at Neby Ketil and the railway, their role being to act as reserve to the 163rd Brigade in the attack planned for the 15th. The greater part of the Battalion was spread along a narrow wadi on the forward slope of which were rough fire positions. "B" Company was stationed near Wilhelma, another German colony, which was later to provide comfortable billets. The Battalion had a fine sheltered view of the advance upon the Et Tire line and saw the 163rd Brigade drive out the Turks with little difficulty. The 1/5th Essex—unusual experience for them in a battle—were unmolested save for the shelling of a post held by "B" Company. During the day two Arabs came into the wadi. They could not speak English, but Padre Marriott, who had lived for some years in Beirut, was able to converse with them in Arabic. The Battalion marched to Safriye by way of Lydda on the night of December 16th, the former town being reached at 6 a.m. on the 17th. Preparations were being made for the advance on Mulebbis. On the evening of December 21st Lieut.-Colonel Gibbons rejoined the Battalion, but did not take over command until the 1/5th had entered Mulebbis, with orders to billet there. The Battalion was in support of the 1/6th and 1/7th Essex and captured one officer and 13 other ranks. For the next five days the Battalion enjoyed an unwonted rest in billets. "It was the first time the 5th Essex had had a break since the beginning of November and the first time all ranks had been accommodated in houses since they left St. Alban's in July, 1915. The change was much appreciated, particularly as Mulebbis had some pretty spots and a few things could be purchased in it, including Palestine wine. It was, however, the poorest Christmas the men had had during the war from the point of view of food. The advance from Gaza had been so rapid, the distance covered so great and the alleged roads were so cut up owing to the torrential rains that it was with great difficulty that munitions and stores could be got up to the front line. Even bread had to be conveyed by train and limber from Qantara (Suez Canal) and its condition on arrival can be imagined. However, with the aid of local purchases, we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, despite all difficulties." On December 28th the Battalion moved into the front line and was able to do it in broad daylight because the enemy were miles away. The Battalion front was spread over a wide area and the three forward companies manned entrenched strong posts. During the daytime most of the men lived in bivouacs in the woods. Battalion headquarters shared three houses—one as an officers' mess, another as an orderly room and the other as a billet. One on top of a hill nearby had a loft and made an excellent observation post, from which the Battalion

scouts, with the aid of Colonel Gibbons' powerful telescope, were able to make note of the enemy movements. Patrols were sent out every night, as it was essential to prevent any surprise attacks or the occupation of any points in "No Man's Land." No trace of enemy, however, was seen during this period of the occupation of the line and so 1918 dawned in a most peaceful manner. Whilst at Fajja news came through that 2nd Lieut. G. M. G. Wray had been awarded the D.S.O. for bravery at Gaza. He had been recommended for the V.C. An officer of the M.G. Company (Lieut. Clive Needell), messing with the headquarters of the 1/5th, recalls that Colonel Gibbons entertained Lieut. Wray to dinner that evening and after mess he presented Wray with the ribbon of the Order. "It was a most charming little episode and as an outsider of the mess I felt very privileged to be present. It is, I think, very rare for a second lieutenant to be given the D.S.O."

6th The end of November was spent by the 1/6th Essex in reserve at Sarona. "We had plenty of good water, fresh bread and vegetables and even wine. We were shelled wherever we went and I am sure that there were spies about." On November 28th the Battalion was located in a wadi east of the village, from which, on December 2nd, a spirited raid was made on some enemy trenches south of the 'Auja. They were found to be unoccupied except for a small party of less than a dozen men, who were killed. The party consisted of "C" Company and two platoons of "D" Company, led by Captain A. J. Renton, who was killed and subsequently buried in Sarona Military Cemetery. Three other ranks were killed and five reported missing. The regimental transport had returned from the 75th Division ere, on December 4th, the Battalion took over the left sector from the 1/7th Essex. The Battalion headquarters were in a house at Summeil, the front of which, however, could not be used, as it was in full view of the enemy, so the staff had, perforce, to climb up a ladder at the back. "We were in the centre of the Jaffa orange industry," wrote Lieut. W. F. Cook, "so, of course, we became connoisseurs of this fruit. The men's bivouacs were actually under the trees, so that when they wanted an orange all they had to do was to reach up and pick one!" The weather was very wet and the forward trenches of the right and centre companies were waterlogged. The 6th were, therefore, not sorry when, on December 8th, came relief of the left, centre and reserve companies, with headquarters, by the 4th Royal Scots, whilst the right company was succeeded by the 7th Royal Scots. The Battalion had seen the last of the 'Auja, for it marched in heavy rain to Yazur ("D" Company moving independently), which was reached on December 9th. With the Brigade the 1/6th moved to the vicinity of Lydda, marching along roads which were deep in mud and water. "The roads were in a filthy state; animals floundered in the thick mud and loaded camels were so helpless that many had to be shot." Less the Machine Gun Company and the 1/5th

and 1/7th Essex, the Brigade marched to Beit Dejan on December 17th and next day bivouacked at Selme, rain still pouring down. The transport had been made up to the full establishment and the transport officer had 115 horses and mules, besides camels, to look after. The 1/6th and 1/7th Essex (right) attacked Mulebbis from Hill 30 on December 22nd, and entered the town without opposition. The former had two companies in the front line ("D" and "C"), each with a frontage of 250 yards; "A" Company was in support, with "B" Company in reserve. The 1/6th Essex passed through Mulebbis and took up an outpost line north-east and east of the town. The next day the Battalion changed its sector, but on December 30th, upon relief by the 1/4th Essex, it went back to billets in Mulebbis. Writing of this period, Lieut. W. F. Cook said the roads were impassable owing to the wet weather, axle deep in mud. The transport difficulties were enormous. The divisional train broke down because of the strain and of sickness, and so the infantry transport had to form a supply train at Yazur, which did the work of both. "The daily convey to Mulebbis was a trial, for it had to be done in all weathers. When one track became impassable, we tried another and at times we had to go via Jaffa and Saron, which meant a total journey of 25 miles daily."

- 7th At the opening of December the 1/7th Essex occupied the Coastal Sector along the south bank of the 'Auja. The weather was beautiful, just like an English summer. Captain Mumford states that he took over Mill Post on December 2nd and found it an unpleasant place, being very isolated and close to the enemy line. Only 25 men were in the post, no more being available. "There were a ford and a bridge in front leading to an island and the Turks forty yards away on the other side of the river hidden in the rushes. The village of Jerishe lay just to the side. The natives kept on signalling and when you moved at night all the dogs barked. We were 500 yards in front of any other post." Another officer, Lieut. R. V. Hosking, wrote that when he occupied the post the week before he and Sergeant Lloyd were so disturbed by the dogs that they crept through the village one dark night and shot as many as they could. It was very exciting work, for they had to jump aside after each flash for fear the watchful Turk on the other side of the river would retaliate. In the daytime the place wore a different aspect, being lovely with trees and blue water. An officer was doing some wiring, however, with a man, when suddenly firing opened on the right. At the same instant it became as light as day, "the Turks saw my light breeches and blazed away like hell. We fell back into the trench like lightning and nearly got bayoneted." The relief on December 4th was not unattended by danger, for the mules which were brought to the water's edge nearly revealed the move to the Turks; then the party at Mill Post lost their way in an orange grove and the guide failed to locate them. The Battalion was in brigade reserve at a wadi near Saron on relief by the



MAJDAL YABA.



RAS-EL-AIN.



Essex Sentry and his escort,



KH, HADRAH,



"Tin Town": FEJJA District, after the first rain,



Jewish Children at MULEBBIS,

1/6th Essex. There was rain every night. The wadi became a quagmire and it was impossible to get the cookers going. The march to Yazur was undertaken on December 8th. "On the way we passed a camel laden with somebody's blankets in the middle of a pond and they couldn't get it out." After a stay of two days with the rest of the brigade, the Battalion moved to Lydda in heavy rain. "We went down the Jaffa-Ramle road, full of pot holes, with white liquid mud over the ankles. Later it became brown in colour. Here matters were more comfortable. Life in an orange grove, with good meals, soon wrought a great change." On December 13th the 1/7th Essex relieved the 4th Norfolks, holding the front line at Deir Tureif, with one company of the 8th Hants at Beit Nebala, coming under the orders of the 163rd Brigade. "C" Company, on the right, held a hill to the north of Beit Nebala; "A" Company was at Zeifiziye Hill and "D" Company near Tombs, with "B" Company north of Deir Tureif. "C" Company's position was described as being "all rocks and stone walls, in the form of a sugar loaf, three sides of which can be sniped by the Turks." "It is a very weird place," wrote one, "with rock caverns and altars, a place of Baal worship. The Turks were 800 yards away. There were no trenches, but sangars, heaps of stones thickened so as to make a parapet, but at present they are not nearly thick enough." When the 163rd Brigade was successfully advancing the line on December 15th the Battalion was in support. "The 2/5th Hampshires went through us in an attack which was successful, and made the second line very much more comfortable. The Turks fled without offering any resistance and we could see them swarming over Horseshoe Hill. We had no casualties, except two runners wounded." During the night the Battalion marched to Safriye, noting the evil-looking natives in the villages prodding and driving incredibly tiny donkeys, and came again under orders of the 161st Brigade. The 1/7th entered Selme at dawn on December 18th, tired out, and encamped in the cactus gardens north of the village. The rain poured down in the early hours of December 19th and the headquarters "bivvy" of one of the companies was soon flooded to a depth of eight inches. "We most unluckily made a small hole in the hedge with a pick and an entrenching tool, and before you could say anything it had turned into a roaring torrent straight on to Battalion headquarters and they never found out! Anyhow, it cleared several tons of water out of our field." An attack on Mulebbis was in preparation and on December 20th several of the officers made a reconnaissance of the Battalion's objective. "We rode up behind Australia Hill and could see the Turkish line running through the orchards on the other side of the plain. In the far distance was the Crusaders' castle, Ras el Ain (known in former days as Mirasel), whilst Bald Hill, a strong Turkish post, appeared to be fairly close on our right. The villages somehow did not seem to correspond with our maps." The Battalion

practised cutting cactus with bayonets, much to the detriment of the latter. The march through Selme early on the 22nd was clogged with mud. For the advance against Mulebbis and Fajja, the 1/7th Essex had "A" and "B" Companies as the front line, "C" in support and "D" in reserve. The offensive commenced at 8 a.m. and three hours later the Battalion entered Mulebbis, then marching through and taking up a line east of the town from Fajja (exclusive) to a track running northward. "C" Company was on the right and "D" on the left, with "A" and "B" Companies in reserve on the outskirts of the village. "The attack started at 8 a.m.," wrote Captain Mumford. "It was terrifically long, through very close country and luckily the Turk had hooked it earlier, so we got the village of Mulebbis and all the commanding country we wanted. An advance of five miles or so and we took over a new outpost line in the afternoon (Langdon Hill Post) and we dug in. My headquarters was that of the late Turkish divisional commander, Yassim Bey. A great change to be under a roof. When we entered Mulebbis we were loudly welcomed by crowds of lovely maidens. For a long time there was some confusion there and the Turks lost an opportunity of counter-attacking. At dawn I went with the C.O. to Fajja, which was being shelled by a battery behind Ras el Ain. We could see a whole Turkish Division streaking away—columns and guns in every direction. If only we could have chased them over the plain!" There was some extension of the line on December 23rd, which caused "B" Company to move up in the front line, leaving "A" Company in reserve. The Turk was about two miles away on Christmas Eve, with lemon groves in between, which had to be patrolled. Christmas Day was wet and there was only the ordinary ration, though the Battalion was thankful to be under cover. One Company headquarters had a chicken for dinner and a pudding made of all sorts of oddments! The reason for the shortage of supplies was that there had been an interruption of the railroad, due to a bridge being washed away. It was during this rainy period that the men found that eucalyptus trees had no virtue in keeping off the wet. At the close of the year the Battalion's strength was 19 officers and 601 other ranks.

M.G. Upon return to Sarona Nos. 1 and 3 Sections of the 161st M.G. Company were temporarily amalgamated, but very shortly afterwards the two remaining guns of No. 1 Section were sent into the line. The end of November was an uneasy time, with expectation that the Turks would exert pressure on the right rear of the British position, but as Hill 265 was reoccupied the danger passed. On December 8th, upon a very wet evening, the 156th M.G. Company took over from the 161st, but fortunately the weather cleared to a fine starry night when the latter began their march to Yazur. The next day, however, rain came down in floods and the Company remained uncomfortably in bivouac. The bivouacs were made of waterproof canvas sheets fitted with

buttons and buttonholes round each edge, with a hole in each corner. Each man carried a sheet and a pole. Two men lived in the "bivvy," which was made by buttoning the two sheets together and supporting each end of the buttoned edge on a pole. The sheets were then pegged into the ground. They gave some shelter from the rain, but not a great deal, especially if there was any wind. On the fine but very dark early morning of December 10th the Company left Yazur for Lydda. "It was not an easy matter," wrote a machine gunner, "loading all the mules and camels on a pitch dark night, with the camel drivers half asleep and the ground thick with black slippery mud. A camel is an excellent beast of burden on the desert, but his flat padded feet are not suited to the mud of Palestine and it was really pitiful at times to see the animals slipping and skidding about and finding it almost impossible to control their feet. Sometimes they practically refused to get up and this was very trying to the temper, as they were always strung together in threes and a trio would thus delay the whole convoy." The Company moved over to the foothills on December 13th to assist the 163rd Brigade in their advance upon Stone Heap Hill, Sangar Hill and the village of Tire. The offensive started at 8 a.m. on December 15th and in an hour and a half all the objectives had been taken, with the exception of Tire, which village was occupied at 4 p.m. The task accomplished, the Company moved back to Safriye on December 17th and next day left for Selmeh. The 52nd Division having crossed the 'Auja on the 20th and the 162nd Brigade having captured Bald Hill on the night of the 21st-22nd, the way was opened for the Essex Brigade to advance upon Mulebbis on December 22nd. Sections of the Machine Gun Company were allotted to support the attack of each of the infantry battalions, but there was no fighting, as the Turks withdrew. Company headquarters were established at Mulebbis and sections of the Company went into the line. One section commander had his headquarters in a little two-roomed cottage at Fajja. He was astonished, one day, when returning to headquarters, to find a little group of Jewish civilians looking round the house, carefully watched by his batman. On his appearance they bowed and smiled, and he gathered that the house belonged to one of the men. They wanted to see what damage was being done and were delighted to find it in good order and that the doors had not been pulled down and burnt!

PREPARING FOR THE FORWARD MOVE.

Whilst there was no far-reaching advance in the period from January, 1918, to September, there was a good deal of fighting to obtain the necessary jumping off positions for a renewed offensive, which was timed for the Spring, but which had to be delayed until the Autumn owing to the transfer of several divisions to France and the necessity for the incoming troops—Indian divisions, with a British battalion to each brigade—to be inured to the climate and trained to the warfare. There was considerable activity during February on the British right, as a result of which, before the end of the month, the Expeditionary Force had established contact with the Dead Sea and occupied Jericho. Before March had sped its course the enemy had been forced across the Jordan by Shea's Group, in which London Territorials played a distinguished part and pushed the enemy beyond Es Salt and on to Amman. The enemy exercised such pressure in return that before April dawned the hold upon Es Salt and Amman was relinquished, though the bridgeheads of the Jordan were retained. Whilst these operations were proceeding an important movement was made in the north, by which the XX and XXI Corps considerably advanced their front. They had first to cross the Wadi 'Auja and occupy the high ground on the north bank about Musallabe, which covered the approaches to the Jordan Valley by the Beisan-Jericho road. Secondly, before advancing farther northward, on both sides of the Jerusalem-Nablus (Shechem) road, it was necessary to deny to the enemy the use of all tracks leading to the Lower Jordan Valley. When this had been done, the enemy would not be able to transfer troops from west to east of the Jordan without making a big detour to the north. This scheme was carried out to the letter. The XXI Corps occupied on March 12th the line of Majdal Yaba and Ras el Ain, old Crusader strongholds, and the northern heights of the Wadi Deir Ballut. The principal part in this operation was taken by the 75th Division, but brigades of the 54th Division were also employed. The 162nd Brigade took Muzeir'a, Kh. Dikerin and Majdal Yaba, whilst the 163rd Brigade seized Ras el Ain. The rest of the Division covered the advance. There was a second raid into Gilead during April, in which the mounted troops again temporarily reached Es Salt and "which did so much to persuade the enemy that the ultimate advance against Damascus would be made by way of Es Salt and Amman and thereby compelled him to keep the whole of his Fourth Army on the east of Jordan." The Turkish pressure upon the right flank was severe in May and they brought to their aid sufficient troops to close the gap through which Es Salt had been raided. In the northern sphere the XXI Corps improved the line during



LIEUT.-COL. J. M. WELCH, T.D., 5th Battalion.



LIEUT.-COL. A. R. MEGGY, T.D., 4th Battalion.



LIEUT.-COL. R. F. WALL, T.D., 6th Battalion.



COL. HAROLD F. KEMBALL, T.D., 7th Battalion.

April by capturing Kufr Ain, Berukin and Ra-fat, across the Wadi Ballut, thus securing full control of the latter. Then on June 8th there was another slight advance, when ground was taken north of Richard the First's Castle at Arsuf. When the time arrived for the general advance late in September the British line ran from the north of far-famed Arsuf on the coast and of the 'Auja, through Majdal Yaba and Jiljiya, across the Jerusalem-Nazareth road, thence in a southerly loop by way of the 'Auja until the Jericho road to El Makhruk was bisected. From this point the Expeditionary Force formed a flank across the Jordan to the Dead Sea facing east.

ON THE BATTLEGROUND OF RICHARD LION HEART.

The East Anglian Division was for a period of nearly six months on ground which was trodden by English troops over seven hundred years before, when Richard the Lion Heart was both monarch and mighty man-at-arms. Arsuf, on the coast, has won immortality from the fact that in the neighbourhood Richard won his great victory over Saladin, a battle which has become a classic for students, because of the expert handling of heavily armed troops against the lighter armed and more mobile Saracens. As early as 1102, Englishmen, under Harding, had succoured Baldwin, the King of Jerusalem. When he was in extremity at Jaffa, they arrived in a considerable fleet with Westphalian allies and beat the Egyptian invaders from the field. "The victory," Oman tells us, "was indecisive, but it saved Palestine, while a defeat would have made an immediate end of the Latin Kingdom." Almost a century later Richard entered upon his crusade, which started with the two years' siege of Acre. This town was entered on July 12th, 1191, and thereupon Richard made his famous march along the coast to secure Jaffa as a base of operations for the recapture of Jerusalem. The formation of the army upon this famous expedition was simple, but effective. Along the shore were the transport and the mediæval equivalent of the labour battalions. Inland, were the cavalry, twelve divisions, supporting each other at equal intervals along the whole line of march, then, inland again, was the main body of infantry, twelve divisions, in continuous touch, and also in close contact with an adjacent body of cavalry, covering the whole eastern flank of the army. With the centre division was the royal standard of England, fixed on a covered wagon drawn by four horses. For nearly three weeks the army marched slowly south by way of the Belus, Haifa, 'Athlith, El Melat, Casarea, Nahr Akhdar, Nahr Iskanderune, through the forest of Arsuf to Nahr Faliq. On September 7th the army was moving towards Arsuf, with the prospect of obtaining rest in Jaffa, when Saladin determined to attack. His troops burst out suddenly from the shelter of the woods of Arsuf upon the mixed array of Templars, Bretons, Angevins, Poitevins, Normans, English, French, Syrians and others, with the Hospitallers in the rear.

The Englishmen supplied the bodyguard of the royal standard. With Richard rode the Duke of Burgundy, who was commander of the French contingent. The Crusading host must have been well disciplined, for they withstood an onset designed to tempt them to break their formation. When the town of Arsuf was in sight the European horse turned and charged—without orders, 'tis said, but coinciding with Richard's intention. So it came that the chivalry of Europe rode down the Saracens and gave them no rest until the enemy retired, leaving 32 emirs and 7,000 rank and file dead upon the field. The loss of the victors was under seven hundred men. The result of this battle had the effect of forcing Saladin to dismantle the fortresses of Southern Palestine—Ashkelon, Gaza, Blanche-Garde, Lydda and Ramle—and leave the coastland in Christian custody. But Jerusalem was not to be conquered, notwithstanding feats of arms which have become legendary among Englishmen. The Tyrian Franks were, by treaty, confirmed in possession of the coastland, but nought else was recovered and the curtain came down upon Richard's great expedition, when he suddenly returned to the relief of Jaffa and repulsed the Saracens just as the garrison, confined to the castle, were on the point of surrender. It was the last exploit in Palestine of the English king—a thrilling combat—in which, with fifteen unhorsed knights, he charged the enemy and rescued the Earl of Leicester and Ralph of Manleon.

CHANGE OF BRIGADIER.

The chief event for the 161st Brigade in this time of preparation and reorganization was the relinquishment of the command, on February 18th, by Brigadier-General Marriott-Dodington, who was respected and even loved by all ranks. When he rode over to the 5th Essex lines to say good-bye, an officer mentioned to his batman that they had seen the general for the last time as brigadier. "Why," he said, in broad Essex, "he was a real father to us," and "that expressed," said the officer, "the attitude of all ranks in the 161st Brigade." He was succeeded by Brigadier-General H. R. H. Orpen Palmer, D.S.O., of the Royal Irish Fusiliers.

First in interest will be the statistics of strength, showing the extensive temporary losses caused by sickness. The varying strength is shown by the monthly summaries :—

	Officers. Other ranks.	
January 3rd, 1918	.. 90	2,839
January 31st, 1918	.. 111	3,362
February 28th, 1918	.. 122	3,518
March 31st, 1918	.. 130	3,645
April 25th, 1918	.. 142	3,663
May 30th, 1918	.. 113	3,284
June 27th, 1918	.. 129	3,366
July 25th, 1918	.. 137	3,105
August 30th, 1918	.. 99	2,725
September 9th, 1918	.. 108	3,277

The actual numbers of those evacuated to hospital are not stated, but how considerable they must have been will be appreciated when the active service casualties for the period to July are given (August's record is missing): January, 5; February, 2; March, 2 (accidentally injured); April, 10; May, 52; June, 2; July, 2—a total of 75. The reinforcements were: January, 41 officers and 1,156 other ranks; February, 22 officers and 377 other ranks; March, 19 officers and 365 other ranks; April, 25 officers and 311 other ranks; May, 22 officers and 514 other ranks; June, 16 officers and 421 other ranks; July, 18 officers and 397 other ranks; August, 21 officers and 496 other ranks—a total of 184 officers and 4,037 other ranks, more than equivalent to the normal strength of the Brigade.

The Brigade was centred on Mulebbis for the month of January. When it became divisional reserve for the last fortnight of the month, one battalion bivouacked at Selme, being relieved every four days in its task of road and bridge repair. There was much preparation for the divisional sports in the Spring. Hot baths were available for all ranks. On January 30th the Brigade relieved the 163rd Brigade in the Wilhelma area, being in the right section of the divisional sector. The Brigade point-to-point meetings were held on February 6th and 14th and the mounted sports meeting at Kufr Ana on the 21st. There was exciting sport, for there were four or five trenches to jump. Captain Mumford, of the 1/7th Essex, recalled that he was going well, but wasn't fast enough and arrived in eleventh. He had, however, a furious race with another officer, who beat him by a short head. These were followed by the Divisional Platoon Tournament, in which units of the Brigade did exceptionally well. There was considerable activity resulting from the 54th Division's successful attack upon Majdal Yaba in March, for which the Brigade was divisional reserve, with headquarters at Wilhelma. A guard of honour of three officers and one hundred other ranks was on duty for the presentation by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught of decorations to members of the Division at Yazur. A Brigade race meeting on March 23rd was described as "a priceless afternoon. The weather was beautifully fine and there were huge entries." The close of the month came with much training, including night operations and the supply of working parties to salvage posts now rendered unnecessary owing to the advance of the line. The Brigade, on April 16th, again went into the front line positions, with headquarters at Dikerin. Responsibility extended from Kh Umm et Takaway (exclusive), across Haram Ridge, thence in front of Majdal Yaba to the Majdal Yaba-Kefar Hatta road. It was a strong system, well adapted for defence. The ground was rocky and rugged and in places almost precipitous, but there was the compensating advantage of a covered means of communication by way of wadis which led towards the front. There were two systems of defence. The first consisted of a series of mutually supporting

works, protected by an outpost line, and in the rear a number of strong points to act as pivots for counter-attacks should the enemy capture any of the works in front. A second system was constructed in the same manner in the rear. The Brigade's section was divided into three sub-sections, each held by a battalion, and each sub-section was organized in company areas, the right and left. The fourth battalion was mobile reserve, with a battalion of the 162nd Brigade in Brigade reserve at Kh. Dikerin. The 4th Northhamptons performed the last-named duty for a time, then the 10th Londons, followed early in May by the 5th Suffolks. The front line consisted, as has been stated, of a number of works, each held by a platoon, so planned that in each sub-section not more than two companies should be in the front line, with the remaining two companies available as supports, as garrison for strong points and for the purpose of counter-attack. The object in siting the posts was that the intervening ground should be swept by cross fire. The instructions in the event of enemy attack were that the posts should be held at all costs. Should the Turks be successful a counter-attack was to be immediately launched by the local commander. If the enemy penetrated between the posts the local troops would hold their ground and the initiative for the counter-attack would pass to the sub-section reserves. In the event of this stroke failing, the sub-section reserves were to hold up the hostile advance whilst further preparations were being made by either the sub-section reserves, the mobile reserve or the battalion in Brigade reserve. The front line units were warned that the enemy would either make sporadic raids, for the purpose of obtaining identification and to inflict loss, or attack in force and, as will be seen, they confined themselves to the former alternative. The best defence against these raids was by means of "protective patrols, the provision of suitable obstacles and by unceasing vigilance." Five Turkish deserters gave themselves up to the 1/7th Essex; in fact, there was a small dribble of men continuously surrendering at this period. There was some fighting at the posts with Turkish patrols, which is related in detail later, including a severe encounter with a detachment of the 1/5th Essex. Late in May the Brigade went into divisional reserve, with headquarters at Wilhelma, and was engaged for the most part in clearing mosquito breeding places along the line of the 'Auja. The 1/7th Essex, however, remained behind as reserve to the 163rd Brigade, a duty undertaken by the other units in succession. There was a change of scene on June 6th, when the 162nd Brigade was relieved in the left section and work was active upon the defences. The dense vegetation in front of the posts was burnt to improve observation of enemy movement. The Brigade was, on June 27th, succeeded by 7th Brigade of the Lahore Division, after which it concentrated at Red House Wood and marched to Sarafand, expecting transfer to Europe. This expectation was

destined to be quickly extinguished, notwithstanding the 162nd and 163rd Brigades had already reached Qantara. Early in July there was a transfer to Beit Nebala, where road work and training, particularly night operations, was varied by competitive sports. August opened with the Brigade in bivouac in an olive grove south of Beit Nebala, with the 7th Essex at Mezeir'a and the 4th Essex doing duty as reserve battalion to the 162nd Brigade. A rifle range was constructed and much used. A rest camp at Jaffa, known as the "Umbrella Arms," was opened for men of the 54th Division on August 14th, and in order to bring officers of the Brigade together the 1/5th and 1/6th Essex combined their messes, and interchanges between these units and the 161st Trench Mortar Battery and 161st Headquarters were made. When again in the line on August 21st the Brigade held the right centre sector of the XXI Corps, which occupied the high ground from Umbrella Hill to Haram Ridge. The front line was garrisoned by four battalions (one being attached from the 163rd Brigade), with one battalion in mobile support (less two companies) and one battalion (from the 162nd Brigade) as Brigade reserve. Although the enemy was quiet and there was very little shelling, the Brigade were constantly improving the defences. Patrols were frequently sent out to reconnoitre the ground. A few enemy picquets were located, but declined combat. An exciting air incident was seen, when two enemy 'planes were brought down after a running fight. On September 9th the Brigade was relieved and went back to Red House Wood, where preparation was made for the offensive which started on September 19th and in which, as will be seen, the Brigade played a prominent and successful part.

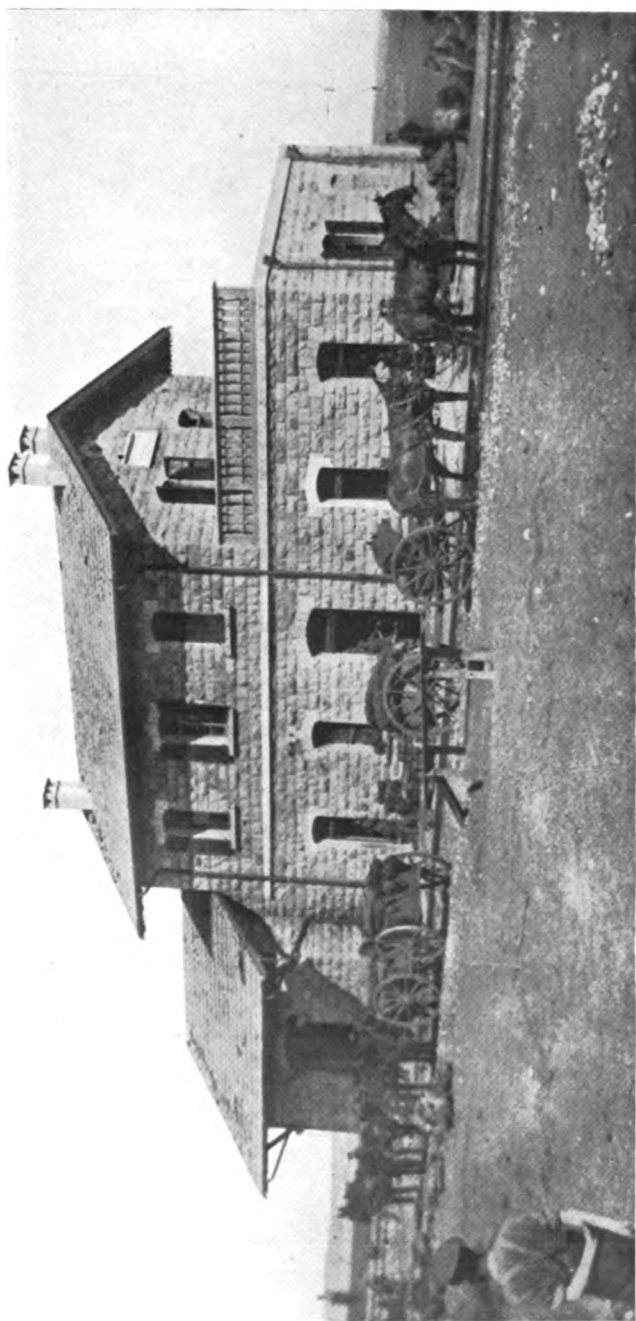
4th From the 1st to 14th January the 1/4th Essex were in the line which they had originally secured around Ferrikhiye Bridge and Mill, linking up with units of the 52nd Division across the 'Auja at Mukwar on the left, with the 1/7th Essex on the right. Much consolidation was done during that period in the orange groves and thick undergrowth by the river banks, where camouflage hedges were made to screen the enemy view of open spaces behind the outpost line. The nearest point in Turkish occupation was at Byar 'Adas, two miles across the plain from Ferrikhiye bridge. The company headquarters were located in packing houses or sheds in the grove. The wet weather increased the transport difficulties, but there was little enemy opposition. Occasionally they would put a few shells into the orange groves. The most difficult post to hold was that in Isolated Wood, about a mile across the 'Auja, at the junction of the road crossing the Wadi Ishkar and Wadi 'Adas. It was garrisoned by platoons from the company in reserve. One day a Turkish Q.M.S. walked into the wood with his company's books and pay roll, together with a considerable number of Turkish notes, forming part of the men's pay. He surrendered because he was "fed up." The enemy were not active, their

interference being limited to the occasional appearance of a cavalry patrol. The real trouble was the difficulty experienced in effecting relief. The intervening ground was a huge swamp, with overflowing wadis, and oftentimes platoons had to go waist deep in water before reaching the wood. On one occasion the weather was so wet and the wind so biting that the men were on the verge of collapse and they greatly appreciated the arrival of a fatigue party with the rum ration early in the morning. Upon relief by the 11th Londons the 1/4th moved to billets in Mulebbis and were busily engaged with specialist training. They also had constant accessions of strength, no fewer than 133 coming back from hospital. On January 30th the Battalion transferred from Mulebbis to Wilhelma, where it occupied billets. During the stay there it received a reinforcement of six officers of the 3rd West Yorks. Then on February 16th the 1/4th relieved the 1/6th in the front line, with No Man's Land a mile in depth to patrol. They occupied Station Post, on the right, with three platoons "B" Company and one platoon "C" Company, whilst Suffolk Post, in the centre, contained two platoons of "C" Company. Rantye Post had the whole of "D" Company and two of "A" Company, whilst in Wilhelma a reserve company was posted consisting of two platoons of "A" Company and one each of "B" and "C" Companies. Among those attached to the Battalion was Lieut.-Colonel R. C. F. Schomberg, D.S.O., Scaforth Highlanders. There were few hostile incidents at this period. The enemy were at Muzeir'a, among the foothills, about two miles away. A Turkish 'plane was shot down one morning in front of Wilhelma Station and the pilot and observer were taken prisoners. The passage of natives at night across No Man's Land to the British lines became so considerable that it was stopped and only those were allowed through who were driving cattle into the line or transporting produce. The Battalion was relieved by the 1/6th Essex on March 4th and was in brigade reserve until the 11th, and during that time won the 54th Division football cup, when the Royal Engineers were defeated at Wilhelma on March 10th. The team played an excellent game, according to an officer of another Essex battalion. They had the valuable assistance of Lieut. Sidney Sugden, formerly a well-known forward for Southend United. The 1/4th provided gun escorts at Qule for the artillery on the night of March 11th. The latter were making gun positions in order to support the successful attack of the 162nd Brigade on Majdal Yaba in the early morning of March 12th. As a consequence the new line left the Rantye and Wilhelma Posts well in the rear and the station became an advanced railhead. The Battalion went into divisional reserve at Wilhelma and took an active part in the preparations for a general advance which was expected in April. All ranks thoroughly enjoyed the stay at this pleasant town, having fresh food from the colony, with new milk from a herd

of cows kept there. Pigeon pie was a most appetising dish. The billets were also excellent. On April 11th the Battalion moved up as brigade reserve to the 162nd Brigade in the foothills at Khurbet Dikerin. The 4th Northants were thus enabled to take over a small sector from the 75th Division, which had suffered heavily in the advance on the right flank and was weak in strength. The Battalion provided gun escorts in the plain below Madjal Yaba and some days were spent in the latter village observing the enemy line. Kh. Dikerin was a very nasty spot and storms blew with such intensity that dust and dirt covered everything. Flies and fleas abounded everywhere and virulent sickness broke out. Towards the end of April the 1/4th relieved the Northants in the line, to the right of Majdel Yaba, facing Kh. Ikba and Wadi Ikba, with the 1/5th Essex on the left and the 75th Division on the right. The general attack which had been prepared was indefinitely postponed and there were constant changes in the Palestine Force, due to the transfer of troops to France. The 3rd (Lahore) Division from Mesopotamia arrived to take over duty in the Coastal Sector. The line of the 1/4th Essex was composed of sangars on the forward slopes of the foothills and the wiring of posts proceeded with great activity. The enemy were also not idle and it was obvious that the news of the German advance on the Western Front had filled them with renewed hope. By pushing British patrols well across the Wadi Ikba, however, the Turks were rarely to be seen in No Man's Land. The hostile shelling increased in intensity and on the night of April 30th there was a bombardment of the front and support lines, which was thought to herald an attack, as the enemy had during the day raided the 75th Division at Ra-fat on the right flank of the 1/4th. The alarm died down, but "C" Company lost four killed and seven wounded, including some valuable N.C.O.'s. The danger from Turkish shelling was not confined to direct bursts on the rocks, but from the loose stones which flew over a wide radius when disturbed by the impact of the missiles. Raids were repulsed to the right and left of the 1/4th, but the enemy left the Battalion alone. This immunity was probably due to the difficult approach and any raiding party would have found it difficult to get back to their own lines across the wadis. On May 5th Major Alexander Keeble, Loyal North Lancs., joined as second-in-command, and the left post of the 75th Division was taken over on the night of the 18th. The 161st Brigade was relieved by the 163rd Brigade on the night of the 23rd-24th and the place of the 1/4th Essex was occupied by the 5th Suffolks. The relief was very slow and was not complete until a late hour. The change was very welcome, even though large working parties had to be found for trench digging on Mount Sinai. On June 6th the Brigade relieved the 162nd in the left sector at El Mirr and, consequently, the 1/4th took over from the 4th Northants. The most active warfare at this period was against the mosquito,

and large numbers of men were employed in destroying their nests in the Nahr el 'Auja, between El Mirr and Ras el Ain, with fruit from the orange groves as welcome refreshment. Private Lister was drowned in the Nahr el 'Auja whilst bathing. Night patrols were also sent across the plain towards Jaljulye. There was a hurried relief by 27th Punjabis of 7th Brigade, 3rd (Lahore) Division, on June 27th, and the Battalion marched to the Brigade concentration area in Red House Wood, where Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Hulton, D.S.O., Royal Sussex Regiment, succeeded Lieut.-Colonel Barrington Wells in command.¹ The march to Sarafand, near Ramle, was exhausting on account of the loose sand. It was understood that the 54th Division was to prepare and equip at Lydda for service in France. There was considerable disappointment when the move was cancelled. During the stay at Sarafand there was much passing to and from hospital. On July 8th, in company with the 1/7th Essex, the Battalion marched to Beit Nebala and there was much road-making in preparation for the advance, which was now timed for September. Platoon and company training was also active, and there was considerable trouble occasioned by boils and septic sores. On July 12th the Battalion marched to Budrus and on the way back to camp practised attack and artillery formation; on the 15th the 1/4th picqueted the heights between Budrus and Haditheh and, again, on the 18th, there was training in advanced guards from Nebala to Haditheh. The laconic entries for the end of the month were: 26th, 39 sick; 27th, 43 sick; 28th, 42 sick; 29th, 33 sick. Then on the last day came a return to Kh. Dikerin, in occupation of the ground vacated by the 91st Punjabis, and as section reserve to the 162nd Brigade. The routine for road-making parties was: Reveille, 4 a.m.; breakfast, 4.30; move off by companies, 5.30. A task work was allotted to each company and there was keen competition to be first back in camp. Classes were held, too, in Lewis gun work and for N.C.O.'s, whilst headquarters personnel were also given instruction in the handling of the former weapon. An observation post was established on the crest of the hill on which the Battalion was bivouacked. Flies and lice were most trying and the number of sick parading daily was about 35, the chief complaint being boils and septic sores. Five officers and 117 other ranks were evacuated during the three weeks' stay at Kh. Dikerin. On the night of July 21st the 11th Londons were relieved and the Battalion went into its old position to the right of Majdal Yaba, above Wadi Deir Ballut. The unit remained there about two weeks without any untoward incident. Patrols roamed where they pleased over No Man's Land. They located enemy posts and also secured several prisoners, one of whom provided most useful information. Small parties of horsemen were also noticed moving about in

1. Colonel Barrington Wells afterwards served in the Russian Campaign and commanded the Slavo-British Legion.



WILHELMA STATION, with Transport of "B" Co., 4th Essex, in Front,



5th Essex Roadmaking at Kefr Insha, July, 1918.

the enemy lines. The number of posts to be manned by the Battalion was fewer than when it was previously in the sector. The British artillery fire increased in vigour and one long-range hostile gun, in reply, did some damage in the back areas. An exciting incident occurred on August 31st, when two hostile 'planes were observed, one of which crashed at Muzeir'a and the other was forced down in its own territory. "During the period the Battalion was in the line," says a note in the War Diary, "nothing of special note has occurred. The spell has so far been a quiet one and a number of casualties have been suffered. One officer and 55 other ranks have been sent to hospital. Water has been fairly plentiful throughout the month and washing water has been given the men every other day." The effective strength at the beginning of the month was 36 officers and 826 other ranks, and at the end of the month it had decreased to 31 officers and 787 other ranks. For the first week in September there was little to record—beyond increasing preparation for a British offensive and a corresponding restlessness of the enemy. When the Battalion was relieved by the 5th Norfolks on September 8th Lieut.-Colonel Hulton left to take up another appointment. Whilst at Yehudiyere reinforcements were received from a disbanded battalion of the Middlesex Regiment and there was a surplus of officers. On September 13th Lieut.-Colonel A. O'B. French Blake, Royal East Kent Yeomanry, took command and on the 14th, in company with the 1/5th Essex, fully equipped and well up to strength, the Battalion marched to Muzeir'a to make final preparation for the attack over the foothills, the plan for which was a replica of that which was to have taken place in April.

- 5th The 1/5th Essex found the wet weather of early January very trying when in the front line at Fajja. Colonel Gibbons recalls some excellent duck and snipe shooting, which he had with primitive guns loaded with odd scraps of metal as missiles. But for the downpours the Battalion would have been delighted with the new situation. The fields, woods and vineries and the picturesque village of Mulebbis made a much better outlook than the everlasting sand of the dusty land round Gaza. The Turks did not leave the Essex in peace and frequently shelled the trenches. Owing to the great expanse of low-lying country between the British trenches and the Turks, the latter had to push their guns close to their front line and it was discovered later on that the British gunners had been able to spot the batteries and cause them to withdraw. On January 9th a hostile 'plane flew low across No Man's Land just as day was breaking and bombed the lane in which Battalion headquarters stood. Whilst on duty at stand-to, just outside the little house which contained the Battalion orderly room, the Adjutant (Captain Finn) heard a loud noise and then almost immediately distinguished the 'plane. He shouted to the men in the vicinity, "Don't fire; it may be one of ours," and this thought kept the front line troops from

opening upon it. At that moment a bomb dropped and immediately Lewis guns and rifles replied vigorously. Several other bombs were dropped without harm and then, amid a hail of bullets, the machine turned back to the Turkish lines. The airmen must have been excited, or otherwise, if they had acted with deliberation, they could have done a great deal of damage. The Battalion was relieved by the 10th Londons on January 14th and went into billets in Mulebbis, where, the next day, it was welcomed with a shower of shells from 4.2 guns, which slightly wounded one man. The aim was good and it was astonishing that the casualties were so few. "The effect on the civilian population," wrote an officer, "was extraordinary. Whether they are normally funky or their nerves had been upset by the fighting in and around their town, I do not know, but most of them trekked to Jaffa, carrying what they could of their worldly possessions. The British counter battery work soon restored calm." For the next week the Battalion carried out an active programme of platoon and company training, including tactical exercises for officers. The latter were rather interesting because they took the men into the country to the rear of Mulebbis. In order that the 1/5th might train with less risk of enemy observation and in more convenient ground, they were transferred to Selme. Companies bivouacked and Battalion headquarters were placed in an irrigation pump house. The latter supplied water for the orange, lemon and banana groves which surrounded the building. Above the pump house were comfortable living rooms, whilst the orderly room was conveniently arranged below. Frequent visits were paid to Jaffa and a party of men, under Captain A. Colvin, M.C. (who had been a curate at Loughton), obtained leave to visit Jerusalem. Whilst there Mr. Colvin administered the Holy Sacrament to the men in St. George's Cathedral. Sports were organized, which included horse and "bending" races. For several days before the former event Lieut. Womersley, the signalling officer, issued racing bulletins, written in the style of "Captain Coe" or "Larry Lynx." These told, in proper form, of training gallops and the competitors' chances. There was also a good deal of serious military training, part of which was witnessed by the divisional commander. On the last day of the month the Battalion relieved the 4th Norfolks and became the left reserve battalion of the 161st Brigade. The change of location was principally made in order that working parties might be provided for the front line and to construct a rifle range. The first fortnight in February had no incident of special note. Large numbers rejoined from hospital. There was a race meeting for the 54th Division, held on ground on the Mulebbis side of Portway Hill, which was numerously attended. There was a well managed totalisator. One of the jumps in the hurdle races was particularly difficult and there were some bad spills. This meeting, being attended by numerous staff officers, made the infantry realize how the

trek from November 2nd onwards had caused severe wear and tear of the clothing. Many had badly patched uniforms and it was not until the officers could get leave to Egypt at a later date that they became as smart and trim as of yore. On February 16th the Battalion succeeded the 1/7th Essex in the front line, which was composed of strong posts, with considerable distances separating them. All around were orange and olive groves and vineyards. Running past Battalion headquarters was a beaten track along which in the early morning and late afternoon large numbers of natives proceeded to Mulebbis from the surrounding villages. Their appearance vividly reminded all ranks of the illustrations they had seen long ago in Sunday School magazines. The men were always riding—usually on white donkeys—whilst the women half trotted behind, often carrying heavy bundles on their heads. The end of the month was noteworthy for the capture made at Nabi Tari by a dawn patrol, which returned with five men, unarmed, two of whom appeared to be Turkish soldiers. March opened with one company at Greyridge Post, another at Orange Post, a third at Peel Post, with the reserve company at Battalion headquarters. There was some trouble with an outbreak of fever and the Medical Officer was kept busy. The scenery was charming. The low-lying ground—"No Man's Land"—was covered with wild flowers, with luxurious blooms, too, in the various groves and plantations. The relief by the 1/7th Essex, instead of being carried out in broad daylight and with ease, was conducted late in the afternoon. The last company did not move off until dark and had some difficulty in finding its way in the pitch blackness. "Major Wilson and I," wrote Captain Finn, "felt like men smitten with blindness when we tried to find our way to the olive grove in which the 1/5th were to live for the next fortnight or so. We were mighty glad to reach the small huts in which the Battalion headquarters mess was located." The men lived in bivouacs and had plenty of room, so that they were comfortable. There was less rain; rations improved and could be augmented by fresh milk and butter. The latter commodities came from the village of Wilhelma, a German colony, which had been taken over by Brigade headquarters. An Essex battalion in turn inhabited the buildings. The German men were interned and the women and children were sent to Jaffa. The cattle were gathered together and put under charge of Lieut. Archer, who was a farmer in civil life at St. Osyth. He had under him a body of N.C.O.'s and men who were skilled in handling animals. The milk and butter obtained were divided among the battalions in the Brigade. The effective strength of the Battalion at the end of March was 32 officers and 832 other ranks, a total of 864. The 1/5th were not in the line again until April 16th, when, as support of the 161st Brigade, they relieved the 11th Londons. The bivouac was amongst the rocks of the Majdal Yaba Ridge, to the east of that village, Mount Ephraim lying to the rear. One

company daily was employed in road-making south of Majdal Yaba, whilst another company was occupied in route marching. The Battalion moved to more spacious ground on April 22nd, which had on each side a tributary of the Wadi Ballut. The worst trouble was the scorpions, of which large numbers were killed. All companies worked upon the new defensive line of the Brigade on the night of April 24th and on the last days of the month hostile shelling was experienced, some of which was meant for a road in Wadi Ballut. The 1/7th Essex were relieved in the line in front of Majdal Yaba on May 2nd, "D" and "A" Companies each holding two posts, with "B" and "C" in reserve and finding garrisons for the three second line works. Battalion headquarters were in a lime kiln, in rear of Majdal Yaba. The changes consequent upon the transfer of troops to France had their influence upon the Turks, who became bolder and, as a consequence, the strain of holding the front line increased. Some of their raids were determined in character and reconnoitring patrols found they had to exercise the utmost vigilance. Two features in the hilly country of "No Man's Land"—"Haram Ridge" and "The Blob"—were objects of particular attention. They were occupied by observation parties in the daytime and by standing patrols at night, in telephonic communication with Battalion headquarters. The most serious affray of this period occurred on May 13th, when enemy shelling was followed by a strong enemy raiding party, which attacked CII Post. The Turks were beaten off, but not before one man (Private Wheeldon) had been killed, R.Q.M.S. Read was mortally wounded in the head and one officer and twelve other ranks wounded, with one N.C.O. wounded and missing (Corporal A. V. Call), who, later, recovered and returned safely to England. The post was on the reverse slope, with dead ground up to within 50 yards. The Lewis gun was placed in advance to command this area. The enemy outflanked and bombed the post whilst the gun crew were engaged along their front. The platoon commander (Lieut. Lucas) was wounded whilst endeavouring to reach the post and for a time there was much excitement. However, with the timely aid of Stokes mortars, which dropped missiles into the hollows, the enemy were effectively dispersed and it was then discovered that the Lewis gun was missing. During this sharp episode, the Battalion headquarters were shelled and the communication lines twice cut. It was there Private Wheeldon was killed and it was there, too, that R.Q.M.S. H. Read received his fatal wound. Colonel Gibbons commented upon the incident that "a court of enquiry into the loss of the gun rightly criticized the position in which it was placed. Had I had my own way, the whole work would have been sited on the forward slope where the gun was, and I believe this was afterwards done, making the post defensible and enabling it not only to command the ground in its immediate front, but to support the posts on its right and left. Battalion

commanders did not get the latitude they would have liked in the manner of holding their front. The laying out of a rigid line and the strict adherence to it is a necessity in close trench warfare, but the posts we were holding were more of the nature of outpost picquets in open warfare, and I think it would have been better if I had been allowed to change the site." The next day the active British artillery set fire to a building in Kufr Qasim and on May 16th an aeroplane, disguised by British markings, let off two machine gun bursts in the right company area. Three hostile patrols approached the outpost line on Haram Ridge and the standing patrol (N.C.O. and six men) withdrew, reporting they had been attacked on three sides. With doubled strength they were sent to regain touch with the enemy. The latter, however, had vanished. Beyond a hasty investigation of the post they did little damage and left the wire uncut. Two large fighting patrols were sent out to "Blob" on the following night, but the enemy did not accept the challenge, reserving their effort for the early morning of July 21st, when both "Blob" and the post C11 were attacked. The patrol in "Blob" was a platoon in strength (32), under 2nd Lieut. A. G. Eden. Nine of the men became separated whilst the platoon was being posted and subsequently returned to the Battalion. Meanwhile, Eden and his men were having an exciting time with the enemy, who were estimated at a battalion in strength, which at that time was about 200. When the ammunition was exhausted Eden gave the order to charge a party of the enemy who were endeavouring to outflank the platoon. The enemy did not face the assault and made off. The Essex men then returned to the Battalion, with nine wounded. Eden was killed during the charge. Colonel Gibbons remarks that "his action was beyond praise. Placed in a most difficult situation, he displayed courage and initiative of a high order." "C11" were also engaged in a spirited defence of the post, outside which the enemy lay until dawn approached. C.S.M. James, of "C" Company, was in command and his skill and resourcefulness greatly assisted to repulse the Turks. The Lewis gun post, which had been enlarged, was held by Corporal A. G. Drury, and by his enterprise in disposition of the men prevented its being outflanked. Search parties later brought in two prisoners and three dead Turks, the wounded apparently having been removed. Their casualties were known to have been heavy, because the artillery caught them in the early dawn as they were hurrying back to their lines. The commander of XXI Corps congratulated the Battalion upon their spirited patrol action, whilst the Brigadier was also complimentary. C.S.M. James received the D.C.M. and Corporals Drury and Dann, the M.M. The Battalion went back to the almond groves of Mulebbis on May 23rd and assisted in the campaign against mosquitoes along the Wadi Ishkar. The flow of water was improved and stagnant pools were treated with oil. On June

6th the place of the 5th Bedfords was taken along the River Auja, so that the men were once again among the orange groves, with good bathing as well. There was fishing, too—with the rifle. The fish were shot at and, though often not hit, they sustained shellshock and thus fell an easy prey. The conditions all round were a great improvement upon Majdal Yaba, particularly the abundance of fresh water. A working party was daily employed in picking oranges for comrades in other parts of the line and their crop averaged 20,000 a day. A flat plain two to three miles in extent separated the troops from the Turks. This area was patrolled nightly and several officers of the 1/5th were mentioned in divisional orders for bold and skilful leading. "The patrols were out nearly all night and came back wet to skin with the heavy dew which hung on the long, coarse rushes. Direction had to be kept mainly by the stars. Nevertheless, excellent work was done. The enemy's outposts were all located and hardly a night passed without drawing fire from them." "When I rejoined from U.K. leave early in June," wrote an officer, "I found the Battalion in the line spread over a wide front in very picturesque country. Orange groves abounded. The Wadi Ishkar made a very pretty picture, albeit it was the breeding place for mosquitoes and there was much agricultural ground around. As I approached Cat House, Battalion headquarters, reached by proceeding along a pretty lane, it was extremely difficult to believe that war was being waged. Only the humming of a British aeroplane afforded evidence of the fact. When I was passing through France on my return from leave I was several times told that the 54th Division was destined for the Western Front. I also heard it in Egypt and now the news came through that such was the case, so we handed over to the 2/7th Ghurka Rifles and moved to a bivouac area at Red House, near Yehudiye, *en route*, as we believed, for Qantara on the Suez Canal." The Brigade went thence to Sarafand, near Lydda, a very dusty camp. Large numbers of infantry and horses cut up the grass and the prevailing winds made life a nuisance at times. Drill, sports and re-equipping were the order of the day. At the race meeting Captain Deakin won the company commanders' event on "Wild Rose," with Colonel Gibbons fourth on Captain Bacon's "Flying Fanny," in the six furlong race. Major Willmott ran a totalisator. It became known that the move overseas was cancelled, even though some of the battalions had entrained, and the divisional commander issued an appreciative order concerning the efficient way in which the arrangements for the transfer had been carried out. The Division thus once more turned its face towards Palestine and on July 9th, thoroughly rested, the Battalion marched from Lydda across the plain to Beit Nebala, surrounded by olive groves. The next day's march was through the foothills of Kufr Insha, a new type of country—very hilly and rocky. The Battalion bivouacked in a stony area, exposed to the sun. Looking around, with lumps of rock

distributed all over the ground, one of the men said, "Well, Bill, I reckon when the Almighty made this place he didn't like it and then threw stones at it!" The men were engaged in making a road to link up Lubban with Wadi Ballut under the supervision of the R.E. and were so organized that a great deal was accomplished. At first the men worked six hours a day. Then task work was tried, which was accomplished in five hours. This led to an order to increase the tasks and it was not surprising it was found expedient to revert to a time basis. Colonel Gibbons was of opinion that the road, which ran near the remains of an old Roman route from Jerusalem to Antipatris, would last longer than that of the former conquerors, for fourteen inches of good metal were put in. The bottom layer was of large stones, properly fitted, then on top another layer of smaller stones five to six inches deep, with macadam on top. When the road ran above the ground level it was maintained by a wall two feet thick, the material for which had to be carried by hand in baskets. The Battalion was inoculated against cholera on July 20th. On August 1st the 1/5th came back to Beit Nebala, where they bivouacked in an olive grove just on the fringe of the plain leading to Lydda, whereon the Romans and Syrians had striven for supremacy. It was a pleasant camp and the Battalion made itself thoroughly comfortable. The training was well varied. A demonstration platoon carried out a scheme before the divisional commander and numbers of staff officers. Hockey was taken up with enthusiasm, a Battalion sports meeting was organized, also a transport show. Parties of officers and men obtained three days' leave in Jerusalem. When the 4th Northants were relieved on August 21st the Battalion had a little change of scene, for the sector was a continuation to the eastward of the Majdal Yaba line and having in front the unoccupied Bureid Ridge, from which we had withdrawn, and beyond which was the Wadi Raba, in the hollows to the east of which the enemy had picquets, and also on the Umm el Bureid, a spur running north. The ground was very undulating. It was a long walk from Battalion headquarters to most of the company positions, although quite a short distance if it had not been for valleys and wadis, with a very stiff climb from the bottom of a wadi up to Battalion headquarters. The divisional staff attached a good deal of importance to the work of patrols, for they desired as much information as possible of the enemy's positions in view of the coming offensive. Men were hard put to it to conceal their movements, for the rocky ground made the going very difficult and the grass was dry and rough. They, however, achieved a great deal, notwithstanding the enemy's uneasiness, which was made manifest by constant firing of Verey lights. On August 28th a group of the enemy, thirty strong, fired on a patrol and when the latter probed another point they were met with further opposition. The next night a patrol of two officers and thirty other ranks carried out a

reconnaissance along the south-eastern slopes of Bureid Ridge and returned by way of Wadi Junction, but no trace of the enemy was seen. Seven deserters came in during early September and gave valuable information. The Battalion was succeeded by the 5th Bedfords and marched to Red House Wood on September 8-9th, where it remained for some days in training. "These were days of excitement. It was known that an offensive was pending and everything one saw and heard indicated that it was to be conducted on a large scale and with considerable prospects of success. The enemy seemed to know that 'something was doing' and his aeroplanes endeavoured to get photographs of the area immediately behind our line, but our airmen effectively dealt with intruders. On the night of September 14th we moved to a bivouac ground adjacent to our jumping off place in the attack. All the coastal area was now becoming well filled up with troops, but in order that the enemy should not be able to detect it, as many battalions and squadrons as possible were located in woods. When this could not be done two battalions had to occupy the area formerly used by one battalion. Not an extra hut was allowed, nor an extra cookhouse, nor anything which would indicate the presence of extra troops. Under this arrangement the 1/4th and 1/5th Essex lived together for four days and the officers used the same mess."

6th The 1/6th Essex were in the vicinity of Mulebbis on New Year Day, 1918, and seven days later they relieved the 1/7th Essex in the divisional sector. There they stayed until the 4th Northants took over on January 14th, when the Battalion took over billets in Mulebbis. Thence a move was made to Selmeih for road-making and back again to Mulebbis on January 22nd, where the 6th remained until the end of the month. Whilst in Mulebbis the Battalion carried out company training and also had two days' musketry on the range. For the rest, large working parties were found for the R.E. for road repair. The Battalion went into the line near Wilhelma on January 31st and remained for a fortnight until relieved by the 4th, when the 1/6th Essex went into billets at Wilhelma and there spent the remainder of the month. Spring had come. "The mud dried up and myriads of wild flowers of all hues sprang up in the long grasses—narcissus, crocus, tulip and anemone all had their season. The orange groves in flower gave forth a scent unequalled in any hot-house at home." The training of N.C.O.'s and specialists was carefully supervised, whilst working parties for the front line posts reminded the men that marching and digging were very much the lot of the infantryman in the Palestine campaign. The Transport Section of the 1/6th Essex won the first prizes for the best turned out wagon and pack mule in the Brigade and represented the 161st in the divisional competition. Lieut. W. F. Cook, when upon a refresher transport course, had the excitement of jackal hunts as a variation of instruction. The deep and wide wadis were

a great help to the hunted animals and on occasion the hunters had to lament too close a contact with cactus hedges. At the opening of March the Battalion sent two platoons in the divisional competition, the officers' platoon being commanded by Lieut. R. E. Cook and the sergeants by Sergeant H. S. Ware. Lieut. Cook's platoon had the pleasure of taking third place, only being beaten by a few points. The sergeants' platoon had the eighth award. In all, 24 platoons competed. The 6th went into the line again vice the 4th Essex—"D" Company, with a platoon of "A" Company, were at Rantye Post; two platoons of "A" Company at Suffolk Post; "B" Company at Station Post, with Battalion headquarters, and "C" in reserve in billets in Wilhelma. Two days later the right boundary of the Battalion was extended to Et Tire (exclusive), "D" Company taking the position held by the left company of the 234th Brigade, whilst "A" Company occupied Rantye Post and "C" Company (less two platoons) became responsible for Suffolk Post. The village of Qule was held by a platoon of "D" Company on March 11th, with the adjacent heights east and west of the village, until taken over by the 1/4th Essex after dusk. No opposition was encountered. On March 12th, after the capture of Majdal Yaba and the advance of the 54th divisional line, the Battalion was withdrawn into reserve at Wilhelma and concentrated about the sandpit and Suffolk Post. There it was employed in training and salvaging material from Station, Suffolk and Rantye Posts, which the enemy's retirement had rendered superfluous. "A" Company was transferred to the bivouac area near Orange Post to supply the guard over the XXI Corps ammunition dump, whilst "D" Company went to Muzeir'a as gun guard and escort to 272nd Brigade, R.F.A. The 4th Bedfords were relieved on April 16th in the front line at Majdal Yaba, the Crusaders' stronghold, overlooking the plains from whence commence the rocky foothills of Samaria. "B" Company (right) and "C" were in the line, with "A" and "D" in reserve. "Trenches were, of course, impossible in this type of country," wrote an Essex officer. "Sangars were built and camouflaged, but they afforded very little cover. Caves were found to be unsuitable as dug-outs owing to the foul gases, but overhanging rocks occasionally afforded good protection. The dry wadi beds which zig-zagged into the heart of this rugged hill country served as communications, but when shelled they were very nasty places to be caught in. However, it was owing to these wadis that we were able to reach Battalion headquarters by daylight, though most of the transport moved at night and pack mules and camels took the rations and water to the front line posts. Rations were good, as the railway had nearly reached Lydda and we fetched oranges by the thousands daily from the groves at Jaffa at the absurd price of five for a penny. At home at this time they would have cost a shilling each, for many were the size of a baby's head. Owing to the hills our line

stretched back at an awkward angle, but it was impossible to advance farther into these hills, where water and roads were almost unknown. More damage was done by rock splinters than shell splinters during a bombardment and if the Turks had kept up shelling for any length of time it is doubtful if we could have maintained our positions." On April 24th it was reported that Private G. Manley, a sniper, was missing and as he could not be found, it was concluded he had been shot by the enemy. The Battalion front line was withdrawn slightly on April 28th, but Battalion headquarters and the reserve company bivouac areas remained unchanged. On May 4th a British aeroplane fell through enemy shellfire in front of "D" Company's outpost line and the pilot was killed. His body was brought in by 2nd Lieut. D. Thomson and Sergeant Bond and the wreckage was recovered later. There was an alarm of enemy activity on Haram Ridge on May 13th, but the Turks were dispersed by shellfire and on the night of May 23rd-24th the 8th Hants took over and the 1/6th went into reserve. They supplied working parties for clearing mosquito breeding areas in Wadi Raba and River 'Auja until the close of the month. The work was trying, as all stagnant water had to be made to flow. On June 6th the Battalion was in the line again north of Mulebbis. and upon relief by the 1st Connaught Rangers it went to Red House Farm, expecting transfer to France. The 1/6th were at Sarafand, near Ramle, at the end of the month. Two brigades had already reached Qantara and the 161st was about to entrain, when the 54th Division was ordered to remain, and on July 8th the 1/6th marched to the vicinity of Beit Nebala and thence the next day to the neighbourhood of Rantis for the purpose of road-making. "It was not an enjoyable march, for our hopes of seeing England had been dashed to the ground. It was overpoweringly hot in those hills. There was plenty of material for road-making, but it had to be blasted and broken up, so the work was slow. In three weeks we laid six hundred yards of roadway on the side of the hill. Water was very short and it was a terrible journey for the transport to fetch rations and supplies. The removal of rocks fetched out scorpions and other beastly things and the movement of troops brought about shelling, which was not at all pleasant while it lasted. The Battalion moved to Beit Nebala for training on July 31st and was not sorry for the change, for many men had been sent to hospital with malaria and sandfly fever. In the transport section the casualties were so severe that each man, including the farriers, had to look after four mules apiece and a squad of twenty newly joined men was received with the greatest pleasure." On August 21st the Battalion was transferred to the mobile support area, still busily engaged in training, and on September 8th the Battalion went back to Red House Wood, there, again, to be specially trained. On the 11th a draft of three officers and 254 other ranks joined from the 161st Brigade reinforcement

camp; they had been taken from other units of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The time for the commencement of the offensive was approaching and on September 14th the Battalion moved up to take the place of 8th Hampshires.

7th The 1/7th Essex were in the line beyond Mulebbis on January 1st, 1918, with "C" Company on the right, "D" in the centre and "A" on the left, "B" being in reserve. The last-named took the place of "D" Company on January 3rd. The Battalion was assigned the duty of reserve unit on January 7th and was quartered in billets in Mulebbis. "The village is most attractive; quaint little villas with red roofs. Cypresses and walks overhung with eucalyptus. Also some little shops where we can buy figs and almonds." There was bathing at the village baths, which was a welcome luxury. Thence on January 13th the 1/7th proceeded to Selme for road-mending until the 18th, when they were again in Mulebbis in succession to the 6th Essex. Colonel Wilmer was temporarily in command of the Brigade and Major Crossley, Worcester Yeomanry, took his place with the Battalion. Training was actively undertaken until on the last day of the month the 8th Hants were relieved at Yafa Hill, with "A" Company (right) in Greyridge Post, "B" at Orange Post and "D" at Peel Post, with "C" Company in reserve. "There," observed an officer, "the foothills turned from deep white to pale mauve in the evening sun and it was a very beautiful sight. Also the sunrise was like an oyster shell—mysterious and transparent." The weather was very wet. The trenches were flooded and mud literally came up to the knees. It was a marvel that the men kept so cheery. The health of all ranks was good during the month. The strength was 30 officers and 804 men. On February 16th the Battalion went into reserve at Red House Wood, near Yehudiye, sending one company per day for work on the defences until the close of the month, when the strength of the Battalion was 29 officers and 858 other ranks. As in January the transfers from hospital greatly exceeded those passing in. The weather turned hot and among the diversions one day was an officers' mule race. On March 7th the Battalion was in the same sector as before, in relief of the 1/5th Essex—"C" Company at Greyridge Post, "D" Company at Orange Post and "B" at Peel Post, with "A" Company in reserve. When the 162nd Brigade took Majdal Yaba on March 12th, "C" Company occupied a position east of Nabi Tari on the railway line to protect batteries in Nabi Tari, which were bombarding Majdal Yaba. Captain Mumford wrote that he was to be in position by 9 p.m. on March 11th and just managed it—"the mules, thank God, did not bray." The bombardment next day, he says, was a marvellous sight. The advance went on from 5 a.m. through Qule and Muzeir'a till noon, when Majdal Yaba was again shelled and captured. "We withdrew dead tired after dark—having roped in a few stray Turkish mules—to new Battalion headquarters, and found all our kit in a

muddle. It rained into the bargain and we got wet, not having troubled to put our bivvies up." Upon the result of the attack becoming known Orange and Peel Posts were abandoned and Greyridge Post was held by "A" Company. Rantiye Post was taken over from 1/6th Essex by "B" Company, with Battalion headquarters and "C" and "D" Companies in reserve. On March 16th the Battalion was back again in Red House Wood, with "B" Company on the right, "A" Company on the left, "C" Company in support and "D" in reserve at Battalion headquarters, which were at the Lime Kiln. The weather continued wet. This period was chiefly spent in training and route marching. One day there was a Battalion cross-country race, which "C" Company won. They afterwards beat Battalion headquarters at football. There was a commemoration service for the first battle of Gaza on March 27th. Night operations were undertaken at Et Tire on March 29th, when the Brigade attacked over rocky country to Muzeir'a and back in heavy rain. On April 6th the 1/7th moved into the line at the commencement of the foothills at Majdal Yaba. A hot wind blew on the first day, which brought clouds of black dust and made everyone wretchedly dirty. "This place," wrote an Essex man, "is full of fleas, scorpions and nasty black millipedes—simply swarming with them." An adjustment of the line was made in the Majdal Yaba area on April 28th, when "C" Company held two posts (A9 and A10) with two platoons in support, and "A" Company two further posts (A11 and A12), also with two platoons in support. "B" Company were in a strong point (B5) in reserve, with "D" Company also in reserve. There was some excitement on the Battalion front on the last day of April, for, following a heavy bombardment, the Turks made demonstrations against various parts of the line. At midnight "C" Company's advanced post on Haramiye Hill sent up a danger signal and withdrew to a sangar. The Turks were massing in front of the Company's posts in the Wadis Haram and Miya. The Stokes guns were effectively turned upon them and they dispersed. The signal wires were constantly cut by shell-fire and the signallers were most plucky in the way they kept them in repair. The Turks withdrew at dawn. It was known that an attack was likely to take place from information supplied by deserters. The strength of the Battalion at the end of the month was 32 officers and 936 other ranks. The 1/7th were relieved by the 1/5th Essex on May 2nd and became mobile reserve in Boundary Wadi by way of Wadi Ballut. The wadi was very steep and strong, and the tents were perched on the sides, the only diversion being a form of deck tennis at Battalion headquarters. There was a raid upon the 1/5th Essex post near Majdal Yaba on May 21st, and "C" Company were sent along the Wadi Ballut to the Lime Kiln in support, but were not required. Two days later the Battalion moved back to Kh. Dikerin and "C" Company went farther back still and relieved a company of the Suffolks

at Muzeir'a, where a Roman temple in orange and pink marble aroused interest. Footballs arrived from Cairo and everyone was playing games and very happy—"The week the Company spent at Muzeir'a is one of the very best we ever had; it was a splendid little camp and the men enjoyed the change." One of the amusements was a whist drive at which the booby prize was a bottle of beer! On May 23rd the Battalion came under orders of the 163rd Brigade, with "A" Company as escort to the 18-pounder battery and "C" Company doing similar duty with the heavy battery. A memory of this period by one officer is a guest dinner at which the courses included soup, lobster mayonnaise (tinned lobster, with sauce made out of Ideal milk) and asparagus. The Battalion strength on May 31st was 32 officers and 936 other ranks. On the same day that the Battalion left Dikerin (June 7th) Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Wilmer relinquished command to Lieut.-Colonel N. B. de Lancy Forth, D.S.O. The new line ran from Ras el Ain—where at the Castle "B" and "D" Companies (Captain J. R. Eve) were stationed—to Lone Tree just south-east of Majdal Yaba. "C" Company headquarters lay back in the Wadi Abu Lejja, with three platoons moving a mile forward at night through the long grass to occupy wired trenches. Battalion headquarters were at Fajja, where "A" Company were in reserve, with two platoons in Garrett's Wood. Upon the first night that "C" Company moved out to the trenches Captain Mumford had an exciting experience, which he thus recorded, "A Turk rose out of the grass at my side and my heart stood still. I brought him in with my revolver to his ear. He turned out to be a deserter and was a Battalion barber. He had seven or eight English hair clippers captured after the first battle of Gaza." There were frequent patrols, with polo behind the line as a diversion for some of the officers. On June 27th, after the Battalion had settled down again after the excitement caused by the expected transfer to France, there was a move back to Red House Wood, near Yehudiye. From thence to bivouac near Sarafand, a very dusty march, as the last part was over the sand. The strength was 33 officers and 959 other ranks. Those going in and out of hospital were almost equal. On July 8th the Battalion marched to Lydda and thence to an olive grove at Beit Nebala, a diversion being the inspection of numerous rock tombs. There were also practice attacks on an Arab village, the inhabitants of which yelled with fear when they saw the men fix bayonets. Whilst there No. 12 platoon of "C" Company beat No. 6 platoon of "B" Company by 2—1 in the final of the inter-platoon football competition and the prize—a barrel of beer—was broached with great enthusiasm. On the last day of the month the 1/7th marched to Kh. Muzeir'a to construct a new road. Malaria contracted at Ras el Ain had an effect upon the strength, which dropped to 34 officers and 896 other ranks. Late in August (21st) the 5th Bedfords were relieved in the Majdal Yaba area, the Battalion being

disposed as follows : "C" Company, at posts C12 and C13 and support works C55; "A" Company were at C14 and C15, and support work CS6, whilst "D" garrisoned C16 and support works CS7 and 8. "B" Company were in reserve. One and a half companies of 1/6th Essex were attached to the Battalion to enable a company to hold works C17, 18 and 19 and D4, with the half-company at C21 and 22. The evacuations to hospital were considerable, sandfly fever being the prevalent disease, which caused the strength of "C" Company to drop from 187 to 80 men in six weeks. There was a substantial decline of strength to 35 officers and 733 other ranks, no fewer than three officers and 227 other ranks being sent to hospital. The 10th Londons took over on September 8th and the Battalion marched to Red House Wood for training. The 1/7th left this bivouac on September 14th and marched to El Muzeir'a in readiness for the advance on the 19th.

M.G. January found the 161st Machine Gun Company with its headquarters in Mulebbis. One of the incidents of a relatively quiet period was the periodical visit of an officer to Jaffa for the money with which to pay the Company. This meant a fairly long ride into the town, lunch at the only hotel in the place, the "Jerusalem Hotel"—not a Ritzian feast—and then a ride back again carrying the money in the saddle holsters and in a haversack. At the end of the month the Company relieved the 163rd near Rantye and the heavy rain turned the black cotton soil into adhesive mud. The departure of Brigadier-General Marriott-Dodington was very much regretted. Major Walker took over command of the Company again on February 15th and upon Captain W. H. Brooks rejoining his regular battalion, Lieut. A. H. F. Harwood became second-in-command. A sub-section of two guns was despatched to Tire in preparation for the coming advance on March 6th. Six days later Majdal Yaba was occupied with little opposition and the whole Company concentrated at Wilhelma that evening. The duties at this period were not heavy and various sports were organized. Some of the race meetings were the better appreciated because any officer's horse with the slightest pretension to speed was entered. On Easter Sunday (March 31st) a small party of Turks attacked Majdal Yaba, apparently to find out what the unusual British activity portended. A forward movement was planned for April 11th, but it was postponed and the 161st Company took the place of the 162nd Machine Gun Company in the hills just north of Wadi Ballut, with Company headquarters at Kh. Dikerin. This part of the line was very hilly and rocky and in parts it was impossible to dig without blasting. The ground, too, was strewn with great boulders. On the 20th April Captain Harwood, the second-in-command, was appointed to command the 272nd Machine Gun Company. Lieut. Clive Needell was selected to succeed him. It had been previously the practice for the machine guns to be sited well

forward on the defensive zone, with quite a large proportion in the front line. This system rendered the guns liable to capture or disablement in trench raids and, as a result of instructions from the brigadier, new sites were selected for the weapons, which roughly followed the support line. The rocky nature of ground made the task of preparing the new positions very arduous, but it was accomplished, particularly good work being done by No. 4 Section (Lieut. Wilson). Throughout April there was a certain amount of Turkish activity, which entailed extra vigilance on the part of the machine gunners. The 54th Machine Gun Battalion was formed in April, 1918, consisting of the 161st, 162nd and 163rd Companies, with Lieut.-Colonel Pigot Moodie, M.C., as C.O., and Major Jones as second-in-command. Although the formation of the Machine Gun Battalion tended to do away with the individuality of the Companies, the 161st continued to be utilized as much as possible with the 161st Brigade. By this time, of course, many of the officers and men who came from the four Essex Battalions had been replaced by personnel from the Machine Gun Corps headquarters at Grantham. Turkish raiding continued during May, particularly upon the posts in front of Haramiye, where the 161st Company was stationed. Otherwise, all was quiet and the reliefs were carried out without incident. Towards the end of June there were rumours that the Division was going to France, but on June 27th, just as the officers of the Company headquarters were having lunch, a telegram was received that the move was suspended and that the Division was to concentrate at Sarafand. The Company was relieved on the 28th by the 181st Company and went to Red House Wood, where it moved next evening to Sarafand. On July 2nd Major Walker left the Company for home and as he rode out of the camp the whole of the personnel turned out and heartily cheered him. Major A. F. Harding, of the Corps staff, and previously of the 162nd Company, was appointed to the command and took over on July 9th. Four days later the Battalion marched to Red House Wood, where, on July 31st, Captain Clive Needell was posted as second-in-command of the 163rd Company (Major Culme Seymour). As the Major left shortly after for a six weeks' course, the command of the Company devolved upon Captain Needell during the final operations against the Turks. Captain Knight, of the 162nd Company, was appointed second-in-command of the 161st Company.

THE LAST PHASE.

The plan of campaign for the Autumn of 1918 was based upon the idea that it should be completed before the rainy season commenced in November. The decision to open the offensive in the middle of September left little more than six weeks to effect the destruction of the Turkish Army in what has been described as "one of the most relentless pursuits in history." The withdrawal of British units to reinforce the sorely pressed Army in France commenced in April and before the month was out the 52nd and 74th Divisions had left as complete formations. Several British battalions were withdrawn from other divisions. The 54th was the only all-white division left in Palestine. In all, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force lost 48 British battalions, six Yeomanry regiments and a considerable force of artillery. Replacements were made from the Indian Army. The 3rd and 7th Indian Divisions were sent from Mesopotamia and men were recruited from India for 24 battalions, whilst six new battalions were raised from the nucleus created by the transfer of a company from each of the 24 Indian battalions then with the force. The 5th Indian Cavalry Division was despatched from France. The troops from India had to be trained, particularly in the specialist branches, and this occupied the summer months. In addition, the railway communication was improved, including the conversion of existing tracks to standard gauge and the construction of another line from Rafah to Lydda, so that a double line ran from Qantara. The roads and bridges were much repaired, particularly the route from Jaffa through Jerusalem to Jericho. Additional landing facilities were made at Jaffa and the water supply was brought to the rear of the fighting divisions. The Turkish force in Palestine was commanded by Liman von Sanders and was divided into three armies—IV, Amman; VII, Nablus, and VIII, Tul Karm. It was composed of 3,000 cavalry, 26,000 infantry and 370 guns. The British force comprised 12,000 cavalry, 57,000 infantry and 540 guns, with approximately 8,000 Arabs, under Sherif Feisal, to aid the advance from Arabia. The XXth Corps (10th, 53rd and 60th Divisions) was commanded by Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode, the XXI Corps (54th, 3rd (Lahore), 7th (Meerut) and 75th Divisions, with French and Italian detachments) by Lieut.-General Sir Edward Bulfin, whilst the Desert Corps (4th and 5th Indian Cavalry Divisions, Australian Mounted Division and Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division) was led by Lieut.-General Sir Harry Chauvel. The intention of the C-in-C. was to force a gap in the Plain of Sharon through which the cavalry could pass to seize the enemy's line of communication at El Affule in the Plain of Megiddo, and Beisan,

in the Valley of Jezreel, whilst it was hoped that the Arab forces coming in from the desert would reach a third point in the enemy's rear, viz., Der'a. For this purpose 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions and the Australian Mounted Division were transferred by night marches to the coast and hidden in the orange groves, olive yards and vineyards around Lydda, Ramle, Jaffa and Saron. The 60th Division was temporarily attached to the XXI Corps. There was thus a concentration of 9,000 cavalry, 35,000 infantry and 383 guns against the enemy's 1,200 cavalry, 8,000 infantry and 130 guns. They were to break through two lines of defence—the first, 12,000 yards wide and 3,000 yards deep, ran north-west from Byar 'Adas to the sea, consisting of a series of redoubts connected by continuous fire trenches. The second line, 3,000 yards north, extended from Et Tire to the Nahr Faliq, in marshy coastland. When the XXI Corps had broken through they were to swing to the right, pivoting on the French detachment and the 54th Division on the line Hable—Tul Karm, the ultimate intention being to drive the enemy up the Mes'udiye—Jenin road into the cavalry at El Affule. When the way was clear the Desert Mounted Corps had to ride through and seize El Affule and Jenin, sending thence a detachment to Nazareth. Leaving a sufficient force to hold the former places in strength, they were to move on, enter Beisan and then seize the Majami' railway bridge over the Upper Jordan. Whilst this was proceeding the two divisions of the XX Corps were to block the exits to the Lower Jordan valley. Nor was this all. A force under Major-General Sir Edward Chaytor (Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, Imperial Service Infantry Brigade and four unattached battalions) were to cover the right flank and by their activity to give the impression that the attack was to come from that quarter. The Arab auxiliaries were to threaten Der'a. The Royal Air Force was to bomb the important points of the enemy's system of inter-communication. Arab activity from September 16th onward was the prelude to the main attack on the 19th.

The latter was to be delivered at dawn upon an objective which ran from Three Bushes Hill (north of Ra-fat) to the Nahr Faliq. The French contingent were to advance north of the Wadi Ballut, 54th Division to take ground north and west of Majdal Yaba and whilst the 3rd (Lahore), 75th and 7th (Meerut) Divisions were to over-run the Tabsor defences, the 60th were to reach Nahr Faliq and form a bridgehead. When this attack had accomplished its purpose, the cavalry, which had been grouped behind the infantry, were to push through and the line of infantry divisions was to make a great sweep to the left, with the French as the pivot, the 54th Division next morning moving north-west into the hills by Hable and the 3rd Division to pass Qalqilye and face east. When the 75th and 7th Divisions had secured the Et Tire line the 7th were to come up on the left of the 3rd. The 60th Division, on the extreme left, with the 5th

Light Horse Brigade protecting their flank, were to swing half right across the plain of Sharon and occupy Tul Karm and cut the railway east thereof. The attack, which was supported by a heavy artillery bombardment, was exceedingly successful. By 11 a.m. the VIII Turkish Army were retreating in confusion over the plain towards Tul Karm. They were caught in the defile towards Mas'udiye, and were bombed repeatedly by the Air Force. The XX Corps moved forward to Nablus on the night of 19th-20th September, and occupied it on September 21st.

The order issued by the 54th divisional commander conveyed the information that along the Turkish line in front of the 54th Division was a series of disconnected sangars and works, lightly held by nine battalions belonging to the 46th, 48th, 57th and 77th Turkish Regiments, the utmost strength of which, including reserves, was 3,600 rifles. They were disposed over a wide area and their morale was known to be indifferent. A fortified post on Semer Tepe was garrisoned by a company of the 3rd Battalion 57th Regiment, comprising about 50 men, another on Yeshil Tepe by a company of the same regiment (45) and a third post on Jackal Tepe by yet another company not more than 40 strong. The intention was to over-run the enemy's positions, capture or destroy his guns and personnel, the success of the operation depending upon the rapidity of the advance. For this purpose brigade commanders were given as much latitude as possible in the later phases, so that success could be exploited to the utmost. The French detachment was on the right, 163rd Brigade in the centre and 161st Brigade on the left. They were to pivot on the Ra-fat salient to a line from its apex through Crown Hill, north-east of Kufr Qasim. The 162nd Brigade, at a suitable opportunity, was to pass through the right of the 161st, move eastward on Bidya and secure the crossings of the Wadi Qana south of Kh. Kefr Kilt.

The particular role of the 161st Brigade was to secure Ez Zakur line and form a defensive flank facing east from Crown Hill to Ez Zakur; then to move east in conformity with the advance of the 162nd Brigade and form a defensive flank facing north pending the advance of the 3rd (Lahore) Division to its final objective. The offensive was to be carried out in three stages: (a) Advance of infantry in accordance with a pre-arranged time table; (b) advance of infantry as rapidly as possible, the artillery lifting off targets according to the pace of the infantry advance; (c) after the enemy's resistance was broken, the formation of a defensive flank facing north to protect the 162nd and 163rd Infantry Brigades as they moved east to secure points which threatened the safety of the enemy when in retreat. It was pointed out that the ground lent itself to the attack being conducted in a series of bounds, or phases, and accordingly there were six phases prescribed. The first three were known as Stage "A" and the last three as Stage "B." In the latter stage no pauses were to take place.

The attack of the 54th Division on September 19th was aided by the fact that the enemy's barrage was wild and ineffective. The French attack on the right was most successful and by the night of September 19th they were in 'Arara, north-east of Rafat. The 163rd Brigade, in the centre, also made good and although delayed by the temporary check to the 161st Brigade north of Kufr Qasim, the leading battalions were in Mesha and on the high ground west of Bidya by next day. The story of the 161st Brigade is given below. Though the whole of the objectives were taken, the hostile opposition in Sivri Wood (Crown Hill) took some time to overcome. The two leading battalions of the 162nd Brigade, after the capture of Kufr Qasim, were ordered to move north of it and face east. The instructions were for the 4th Northhamptons and 11th Londons to advance between Sivri Wood and Crown Hill, but when the Brigadier (Brigadier-General A. Mudge) heard that two Essex battalions were to renew the attack on Sivri Wood, they were ordered to stand fast, for the routes crossed almost at right angles and the 162nd stood a grave risk of being caught by the barrage of the 161st Brigade. The Northhamptons and Londons had, however, already gone forward and as they moved earlier than the Essex battalions there was no untoward happening. The advance of the 162nd Brigade was of material assistance to the Essex men. The former reached the south bank of the Wadi Qana and the Northhamptons got as far as Kh. es Samra. "The 54th Division and D.F.P.S. had thus successfully accomplished their task, having completely broken through the enemy's defences on the right and formed the pivot for the whole offensive movement on the left. About 700 prisoners, nine guns and 20 machine guns had been captured at a cost of 535 casualties. Owing to the nature of the country, the troops under Major-General Hare's command had had about the most difficult task of all in the early stages of the attack, but the resistance of the enemy had never been really stout."

161st BRIGADE IN ACTION.

On the evening of September 18th, 1918, the 161st Infantry Brigade bivouacked in the neighbourhood of Muzier'a, the four Essex Battalions also having with them the 161st Machine Gun Company and the 161st Trench Mortar Battery. The 1/5th and 1/7th Essex moved to the forming up position by the new Dikerin Road and Boundary Wadi Road and the 1/4th and 1/6th Essex by the Haram Road, the machine guns and trench mortars using the Yrba-Kefar Hatta track. "Shorts and jackets were worn by all ranks," says Colonel Gibbons. "I voted for trousers, but was over-ruled. Shorts give greater freedom of movement and are cooler, but the nature of the rocks and wiry grass we were to attack over was very rough on bare knees, as we found

to our cost." (Later in the same book Colonel Gibbons remarks that "everybody's knees were in a shocking state from the sharp rocks and prickly grasses and I regret to say many cardigans were minus their sleeves, which were used as knee protectors"). Haversacks were left behind and everything was carried in the pack. This was sound, as haversacks carried at the side are very uncomfortable and it made room for two water bottles, which were considered a necessity and proved a great boon. In the pack were fifty rounds of extra S.A.A., cardigan, cap comforter, washing and shaving kit, two iron rations and a pair of socks. Each man had a triangular tin disc sewn on the back of his pack, which, flashing in the sun, informed the artillery where the infantry were. Each company carried five Very pistols and a proportion of flares for signalling to the acroplanes. Platoons also carried two yellow flags to mark the position of the front line. Signallers were provided with "flappers" for visual signalling to the rear. Each company carried 30 rifle grenades and a few dischargers for firing them, also a supply of hand grenades. In case of necessity, the latter were convertible to rifle grenades by screwing sticks into them and discharging from the old cup attachment. "I do not know whether the compulsory rest was enforced in other wars, but it seemed to me to be an interesting feature of this one," wrote another officer. "Prior to going into a 'big show,' where conditions allowed, all ranks were ordered to rest. All who had had experience took full advantage of this, but in no case was noise or movement about the camp or bivouac site allowed. Differences in temperament were judged from remarks made afterwards. Some men could sleep soundly before a battle (I could; in fact, my fear was whether I would be called at the right time). Other men seemed concerned by the prospect of being in action and could not sleep a wink. On this occasion the bivouac area was particularly peaceful until the time arrived to move off. Still, it seemed strange that grown men should be sent to bed at an early hour just like children." Progress to the forming up place and all operations in the area were assisted by the undulating nature of the country. The march to the tapes laid out by the R.E. was conducted most of the way along the dry water courses (wadis), which were a prominent feature of this area.

The enemy appeared to expect an attack and put down a considerable barrage on the works in the front line on at least three occasions during the night—at about 9 p.m. on the 18th and about 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. on the 19th. The last barrage came down just as the battalions were forming up on the tape line or were approaching it. The casualties were, however, few and the Brigade started the attack punctually to time, 3.50 a.m. The 1/5th and 1/4th Essex were in the front line, followed by the 162nd Machine Gun Company, the 1/7th and 1/6th Essex being the second line battalions. The enemy continued to shell lightly during the advance towards the Bureid Ridge, but

luckily with little effect. Once across the Wadi Miye the enemy positions on the Bureid Ridge and the Kh. Umm el Bureid were rushed with but slight loss to the attackers and three officers and 66 other ranks were captured. The 1/5th and 1/4th Essex continued their advance to the north of the Wadi Rabah, where a pause of fifteen minutes had been arranged. The 161st Machine Gun Company, who had worked east up the Wadi Raba, formed up in rear of these battalions. The 1/7th and 1/6th Essex were still in the second line. The 162nd Machine Gun Company took up positions on Bureid Ridge to cover the attack on Hills 479 and 466. It had been arranged that the 161st L.T.M. Battery (four guns) should join the front line battalions during the fifteen minutes' pause, but they failed to do so through a misunderstanding. At the time appointed the attack was continued and the second objective was assaulted and captured by 6 a.m. These hills were held by from one hundred to one hundred and fifty of the enemy, with several machine guns and automatic rifles, and the whole garrison were either killed or captured. A further pause of fifteen minutes was taken to enable the front line battalions to reorganize and to allow the 161st Machine Gun Company to take up position for overhead covering fire on the Qasim Ridge. At 6.10 the attack on the Kufr Qasim-Jevis Tepe position was launched, the 1/5th and 1/4th Essex again being the assaulting battalions, supported by overhead fire from the machine guns and certain platoons of the 1/7th and 1/6th Essex. It was expected that the enemy would hold the positions in strength, but it was subsequently found that the trenches were of very poor construction and that they were not garrisoned by infantry, but by crews of scattered machine guns and automatic rifles, mostly on Jevis Tepe. At 7 a.m. the whole position was in British hands with slight casualties. Several of the machine guns and rifles were abandoned by the enemy, who also lost five officers and 80 other ranks taken prisoner. Up to this time the programme as arranged had worked without a hitch. All the objectives had been captured according to time table and the artillery and machine gun barrages worked most smoothly. The Lewis gunners pushed well forward in the attack and boldly operated their weapons, thus knocking out or silencing the fire of many hostile machine guns. During these three phases the Turk put down a considerable barrage—first along the Wadi Miye and afterwards in the Wadi Raba, but luckily he was a few minutes late in each case and so caused few losses. On the Kufr Qasim line a pause of forty minutes was made to enable the 7th and 6th Essex to pass through the leading battalions and continue the later phases of the operation. Whilst this change was taking place the enemy shelled Qasim Wood, but again without causing serious casualties. From this point onward the intention was that the movement should be carried out as quickly as possible, with the artillery lifting according to the pace of the infantry advance. At 7.35 a.m.

the 1/7th and 1/6th Essex moved against Sivri Wood, Sivri Tepe and Semer Tepe. No sooner had the leading waves of the 1/7th Essex debouched from Qasim Wood than they came under heavy and accurate cross machine gun-fire, which caused eighty casualties in the leading companies and forced them back to the shelter of Qasim Wood. Sivri Tepe was revealed to be the real key of the enemy's position. A large, deep, cup-shaped hollow lay between the Tepe and Kufr Qasim and, in addition to the sangars near the top of the hill, there was also an underfeature, the sangars of which had not been touched by the bombardment. The Brigadier, noting from personal observation at battle headquarters (Post C15) that the enemy were still holding Sivri Tepe, arranged for a further bombardment and ordered the 1/5th Essex to attack at 11.30. Shortly afterwards he heard that the divisional commander had ordered two battalions of the 162nd Brigade to move round and push forward between the Crown Hill and Oghlu Tepe. The enemy must have evacuated Sivri Tepe unobserved during the ensuing bombardment, for the two battalions just mentioned passed across the front of the enemy's position between Sivri Tepe and Kufr Qasim. The occupation of Sivri Tepe by the 1/5th Essex, who had taken up the offensive again, was delayed by the difficulty of stopping the heavy artillery shelling, but the position was eventually entered unopposed at about 11.15 a.m. Meanwhile, the 1/6th Essex had been held up by machine gun fire at Semer Tepe, but further artillery support enabled them to occupy it unopposed at the same time as Sivri Tepe was taken. Thence onwards no further resistance was experienced and the 1/5th Essex were ordered to move to their final objective. The advance of the 1/6th Essex was again delayed by the heavy artillery bombardment. The line, Ez Zakur-Point 419 exclusive, was, however, occupied by 4.15 p.m.¹ The Battalion was slightly withdrawn later, only to reoccupy the line again at 5.30 p.m. The 1/5th Essex reached their final position by 6.15 p.m., obtaining touch with the 162nd Brigade on their right and 1/6th Essex on the left. Shortly afterwards the 3rd (Lahore) Division passed across the front of the 1/5th Essex and the Brigade was squeezed out of the front line. The enemy material captured by the Brigade included nine machine guns and three automatic rifles, whilst a 5.9 howitzer was found abandoned.

The 161st Brigade had a fighting strength at the commencement of the operation of 108 officers and 3,277 other ranks, a total of nearly 3,400, and when a return was made a week later the strength was 90 officers and 2,754 other ranks, or 2,844 in all. The casualties totalled 327, including four officers and 43 other ranks killed, 12 officers and 204 other ranks wounded, with 64 missing, some of whom were later reported killed. There

1. "The position could have been taken earlier, but for an error committed by the headquarters of the 6th Essex, the Commanding Officer's messages asking for the artillery to lift not being sent off."—*Military Operations Egypt and Palestine*, Vol. 11, p.475.

was also considerable sickness at this time and as the reinforcements during the month numbered 28 officers and 1,437 other ranks, the losses from all causes were fairly heavy. Now for the parts played by the respective Battalions.

- 4th The 1/4th Essex marched at 1.10 a.m. by way of the Majdal Road and Haram Road to the assembly position on Haram Ridge. Platoons marched along the Haram Road at distances of 50 yards, but the Lewis gun mules were left at the Lime Kiln, as the road was subject to a hostile barrage. At 3.40 a.m. the Battalion was ready in the following order—"A" Company on the right, with "C" Company in rear; "D" Company on the left, with "B" Company in the rear, Battalion headquarters in the centre. Forming-up occupied longer than was anticipated owing to the rough ground. Some disorganization was also caused by Turkish fire of all arms at 3.30 a.m. Thanks to the excellent work of Captain Reddie, of "A" Company, Lieut. Barlow, of "B" Company, and Lieut. Ashbee, of "C" Company, these difficulties were overcome and the advance was not delayed. At 3.50 a.m. the Battalion crossed the Haram Ridge and Wadi Miye and halted on the southern slopes of Bureid Ridge until the barrage lifted. There was some congestion caused by mixing with other units and in the dim light of dawn part of the Battalion headquarters personnel went astray. When the barrage lifted from Bureid Ridge the advance continued at 4.50 a.m. Two platoons of "A" Company cleared a point on the right flank, whilst the rest of the Battalion occupied the Ridge, 2nd Lieut. H. H. Ward, of "A" Company, being killed shortly before reaching the objective. "D" Company extended its frontage approximately 500 yards to cover the enemy defences and when "B" Company arrived, having been warned of the contingency, they filled the gap between the left and right companies caused by the extension. Touch was maintained with the 1/5th Essex on the right. A platoon of "D" Company, under 2nd Lieut. Clover, worked round to the west of Sangar, from which several machine guns were firing. These defences were rushed and three officers and 66 other ranks were taken prisoner, with four machine guns and two automatic rifles. The remainder of the Company maintained the original line of advance, covered by machine gun fire, and further prisoners were taken. "B" Company, moving in line with "D" Company, crossed the Wadi Raba under heavy machine gun fire, which was countered by spirited work by two Lewis guns from Bureid Ridge. Private Kefford maintained continuous fire and silenced two of the hostile machine guns. Meantime "A" Company had been checked by the enemy, but the steady progress of the centre company caused the Turks to retire. They endeavoured to stay the advance again at another point, but the centre company enfiladed their sangars and the whole line was able to push vigorously forward. By 6.20 a.m. the second objective was in British hands. About a score of prisoners were taken by "B" Company from some

sangars, including two automatic rifles, one of which was brought to bear on the enemy, who were retreating to the N.E. The Company owed much to the splendid example of A.C.S.M. Gillingham, who was unfortunately killed whilst leading the men forward. "A" Company also collected a dozen prisoners. The third objective, Kufr Qasim (exclusive)—Jewis Tepe, was not strongly opposed, for the troops followed the barrage closely and the enemy showed no desire to hold their ground. The 161st Machine Gun Company gave excellent support from Jewis Tepe. "B" and "D" Companies outflanked the sangars which obstructed their advance and by 6.55 a.m. the Battalion had again fulfilled instructions to the letter. The 1/6th Essex passed through and became the attackers, but were held up by a very heavy fire of all arms. Meanwhile, the 1/4th were hastily reorganized. Two platoons of the reserve ("C") Company (one of which had just reported after carrying for a hostile trench mortar battery) were attached to "A" Company to take the place of two platoons which had reinforced "B" Company. The British artillery searched the enemy positions on Sivri Tepe and Semer Tepe and the 1/4th Essex concentrated at Wadi Hatta, from whence they moved up the eastern slope of Semer Tepe—"C" Company on the right, "A" Company in the centre and "B" Company on the left. Enemy snipers on Kefar Bara were overrun and at 12.30 p.m. the Battalion was on the northern bank of Wadi Bara, where a pause ensued owing to the fire of the supporting artillery. "D" Company, which had been delayed, joined the Battalion, having worked up the Wadi Bara. A patrol, under 2nd Lieut. Boyce, was at once sent out and located the position of the 1/7th and 1/5th Essex on the right. The comments of the Commanding Officer (Lieut.-Colonel A. O'B. French Blake) were: Throughout the whole operation the enemy retired readily when pressed, but always looked for opportunity to reoccupy positions if our barrage was not followed up closely. During the later phases the slackening of hostile artillery fire indicated movement of his guns. Communication from Battalion headquarters was difficult throughout owing to headquarters being broken up on the Wadi Miye, the rapidity of the advance and the extent of the front occupied. A great part of the success of the operations was due to the fine command displayed by Captains Lee and Reddie and Lieut. Barlow, and the splendid leadership of 2nd Lieutenants Clover and Thain. Corporal Jones, "C" Company, did sterling work in encouraging his platoon, also Lance-Corporal Giggins. Sergeant Bridger set a fine example to his men. Privates Smith and Gollar, "D" Company runners, showed great devotion to their duties."

5th The 1/5th Essex moved off at 1 a.m. and halted at the jumping off point at 2.30 a.m. The Lewis gun mules were unloaded and led away, with instructions that they were to be brought up to Kufr Qasim as soon as the situation permitted. The tape line had been pegged out in the early evening by the R.E., for the

purpose of giving the Battalion proper direction. The noise made by them when so doing apparently attracted the enemy's attention and there was some shelling, but happily with only slight casualties, although the Brigadier and his staff had a narrow escape. Colonel Gibbons, knowing the ground well, formed the Battalion up 250 yards in rear of the tape and only stopped long enough to correct alignment when crossing it. Among those who were wounded at this time was Captain Portway, M.C., of "B" Company. The ground had been well patrolled and at the opening stages of the advance, which commenced at 3.50, the companies were left well in hand and moved forward on the narrower front that had been ordered. The objective had a frontage of a thousand yards and the companies covered it as they approached without mishap. The preliminary stages of the movement were conducted in absolute silence and "for the first forty minutes," confessed an officer, "I experienced the queer feeling caused by the impression that we were getting no support from our own people. Our guns were quiet during this period, which seemed so long that on occasions I heard remarks such as 'What's happened to our artillery?' and 'When are our guns going to open fire?'" When the 1/5th Essex had passed over the high ground to Wadi Miye, however, the offensive was held up for twenty minutes whilst the enemy positions were heavily bombarded by the British artillery, "which must have been a fine display of fireworks," remarks Colonel Gibbons, "for those who had the luck to see it." The alarm of the enemy was made manifest by Very lights and single white and double green flares, followed the discharge of high explosive, but the ground was not strongly held and the Battalion passed on to Umm el Bureid, before which "A" Company deployed to attack, but the Turks were still on the move and in this unwired position at 5.50 a.m. "A" Company reorganized and passed into reserve. The other three companies then extended upon a front of a thousand yards on Wadi Raba. The enemy put up firmer resistance on the right at Hill 479 and the left spur thereof, where "B" Company were met by wired sangars containing machine guns. With the aid of the Lewis guns, which were skilfully moved forward under the cover of rocks and fired from the flank, three of the machine guns were silenced and two of them were captured and the teams either killed or taken, nine of the latter being subsequently sent to the rear. Whilst this operation was being successfully conducted, "A" Company guarded the right flank. Over the next ridge went the three companies with the intention of taking Kufr Qasim village and wood. They entered these positions unopposed just as the barrage lifted, save for a rifle and machine gun fire from a position some distance in the rear and also from artillery, which was obviously bothered by the rapidity of the Battalion's advance. Two of the companies pushed to the edge of the village and wood and the Lewis gun teams caught the enemy retiring upon Sivri Tepe and

Wood, but severe casualties were sustained at this point because of the lack of cover. Among the killed was Sergeant Jarrold, commanding the Lewis gun section. "If the enemy gunners," wrote a participant, "had fired on the positions which we had captured while we were there our casualties would have been very heavy. As it was, the advance was so rapid that we had the pleasure of looking back and seeing terrific explosions and numerous direct hits on positions which no longer interested us. This continued until we reached Kufr Qasim." The northern edge of the wood and village were securely held and the gap between the 161st and 163rd Brigade was well covered, the latter being in visual communication with the 1/5th Essex. The 8th Mountain Artillery Brigade came up and soon got busy with their guns. They also established a field observation post in a house at the north-western corner of the village and connected their line to the left company, to whom a line was also laid from battalion headquarters. A field observation officer from the 270th Field Battery accompanied the Battalion, but as his cable mule was killed by shell-fire, he was unable to communicate with his battery. "This was another illustration," said an officer, "of the manner in which excellent pre-battle arrangements can be upset in action. Fortunately, it did not affect us seriously in this instance. In the first battle of Gaza the distance the front line troops covered was such that the telephone cable did not reach anywhere near them. In the third battle of Gaza the wire from Brigade headquarters to the Battalion's battle headquarters did not work and we had to depend on runners, some of whom were wounded. The fact that the Battalion scout and intelligence officer and another officer who were responsible for keeping direction were killed also caused delay in capturing objectives. In this Battle of the Foothills at night we had great difficulty in obeying instructions to establish visual communication (by lamp) with Brigade headquarters, because there was a hill between us and them. Eventually, however, this was managed. These instances are given to show how difficult it may be to follow out pre-arranged plans." The Battalion was in fine fettle and eager to go forward, but the time had come for the 1/7th Essex to take up the offensive and they passed through the Battalion for that purpose. The Turks, however, had rallied in Sivri Tepe and Wood and when the 1/7th issued from the village to advance over half a mile of flat ground they were heavily smitten and sustained considerable casualties. The forward movement was checked and the 1/5th Essex prepared for a counter-attack, though there was not much likelihood of, or danger from, that contingency, for the right of the Division was coming into line with the 1/5th. At 10.35 the Battalion was given another opportunity, for orders came to take Sivri Wood and Hill 512, which lay some 400 yards in rear of the former. "C" Company were placed in the firing line, with "D" Company in support and "A" and "B" in local reserve. Whilst these

preparations were being made the 5th Bedfords, from divisional reserve, passed through. "A" Company was echeloned to the right, in order to cover the Battalion's right flank and threaten the enemy's left. On receiving the order to advance the Battalion got going surprisingly quickly. It was felt that serious fighting lay ahead. The continued advance of the 162nd Brigade on the right, however, had caused the Turks to waver and they began to leave the Wood in large numbers, the 5th Bedfords making a big haul. At 10.55 a.m. there came verbal orders through the officer commanding the 1/7th Essex to take Sivri Tepe, then being severely bombarded. "C" Company were allowed to press on and occupy the wood, whilst "D," "A" and "B," in that order, were sent against the hill, with two companies of the 1/7th Essex in support. "This, again, seemed a difficult task, for it was really a commanding hill and the enemy could have given us a thoroughly bad time—but they didn't stop." There was excellent observation. Although the shelling caused the enemy to retire on several occasions, they immediately returned, but the artillery barrage was so well handled that when the 1/5th were ready to jump in, it lifted, so that they were covered to the last minute. The enemy did not wait for the bayonet, however, and this formidable hill, "which had frowned down on us for so many months," was soon crowned by the cheering men of "D" Company. "C" Company, from Sivri Wood, was called up and the Battalion was reorganized on the slope. "Two Turkish field kitchens," wrote Colonel Gibbons, "were found in the gully to the right of the hill, with fires going and a meal of boiled lentils, all hot. There were some water bottles also, which replenished our water bottles and were highly appreciated; it was a scorching day. We had advanced already over five miles of very rough rocky country in battle formation and were glad of a rest." From the hill-top the Battalion watched heavy but useless enemy artillery fire in its rear upon the vacated village of Kufr Qasim and in front the successful advance of the Lahore division. "General Chase" was ordered at 3.45 p.m. It appeared as though the Battalion was in for a long and trying march, but, fortunately, it had not far to go, for the fighting was over. It went forward as a complete unit, even with the ammunition mules, for Sergeant-Major James had kept close up with them. In artillery formation the Battalion crossed Wadi Qana and occupied the hills to the north, where it rested for the night, with the 1/10th Londons on the right and the 1/6th Essex on the left. The Lahore Division occupied the whole of the ground to the front and the outpost line was, therefore, only lightly held by portions of three companies and a section of 161st Machine Gun Company, the commander of which was a real friend in need, for he had a bottle of whisky with him. The remaining company was with Battalion headquarters. The only hitch was with the Battalion signallers, whose repose was delayed owing to the difficulty in

establishing lantern communication with Brigade headquarters. Nothing occurred to disturb the night's rest and all ranks slept soundly after a trying but victorious day. They awoke next morning to find the water and ration camels had arrived. The commanding officer was exceedingly satisfied with the behaviour of all arms, for he wrote: "Lewis guns were very effectively used in the rocky ground, being pushed well forward and bringing oblique fire on the enemy sangars. On three occasions enemy machine guns were silenced in a few minutes by Lewis guns, two of the machine guns being captured. While the Battalion was stationary, the fire of Lewis guns had a marked effect on the enemy's fire and generally had the last word. Rifle fire on our side was not required in any volume for covering movement, our advance never being seriously checked. Many enemy were caught when retiring from Qasim Wood and about thirty casualties were inflicted. The bayonet was only used on a few occasions, the enemy evidently being in no mind to wait for it. Rifle grenades were also fired and three Turks broke cover on one grenade bursting near them. Hand grenades were not used." "The impressions that remain," wrote another officer, "are that several years of war experience had made the British troops very highly disciplined and we went into battle almost as though going on parade. The assembly and the subsequent advance were very trying, as we were on the go from 1 a.m. to 10 p.m. over very hilly and rocky country. As usual, we suffered a great deal from thirst, as when the sun came out it was extremely hot and we were passing through unsheltered country." The casualties were not heavy. The killed numbered two officers (Lieut. F. Eames, 3rd Yorks, attached) and 2nd Lieut. E. G. P. Fenn (6th R.W. Fusiliers, attached) and five other ranks; two more died of wounds; there were 48 wounded, including one officer, six missing, whilst seven were sent to hospital—a total of seventy.

6th The 1/6th Essex had the task of supporting the 1/4th Battalion in the initial operations known as Stage "A" and then passing through for the execution of Stage "B," which comprised the capture in succession of Semer Tepe, Jackal Tepe and the Ez Zakur line. The advance was to have the requisite artillery, machine gun and trench mortar support, the lift of the barrage to be notified by daylight mortar signals as soon as the assaulting companies were in position and ready to attack. The Battalion was commanded by Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Ewer, with Captain H. H. Clark as adjutant, whilst the company commanders were: "B," A./Captain L. E. Amsden; "D," A./Captain J. L. D. Howitt; "A," Lieut. F. A. Riegenbach; "C," Lieut. R. E. Cook. On parading at a quarter past midnight on the 19th the Battalion marched to the assembly position near Majdal Yaba, from which point the advance commenced at 3.50 a.m. Upon the 1/6th passing through the 1/4th Essex against Sivri Tepe and Semer Tepe, they were held up by shell-fire and particularly heavy machine gun-fire, which caused a number of casualties,

including Lieut. Riggenbach, of "A" Company, who was succeeded by Lieut. A. F. Waskett. Artillery fire was concentrated upon these positions, as a result of which Semer Tepe was captured at 11.30 a.m. and the Battalion continued its advance, occupying Yeshil Tepe and then, later, Jackal Tepe and the Ez Zakur line, which were entered at 4.15 p.m. An outpost line was established by three companies in and about Ez Zakur, with battalion headquarters and "A" Company (in reserve) at Jackal Tepe. The 1/5th Essex were on the right and the 8rd (Lahore) Division on the left. The prisoners captured during the day numbered 55 of all ranks, with two machine guns. The killed, including Lieut. Riggenbach, numbered ten, whilst two died of wounds. There were fifty wounded, including four officers. "Johnny had hung on to his positions on the foothills overlooking the plain where the main advance was taking place," wrote an officer, "and our division had the unwelcome task of kicking him out, but it was a bigger job than we anticipated. The boulders and sharp rocks were really cruel for the men and when daylight came the Turks sniped along the gullies with enfilading fire, so that the Battalion could neither move forward nor backward. The only way that animals or wagons could get up was by a rough path round the foothills. This was soon blocked, however, for the supply train, seeing the troops advancing along the plain, used this same track, which ordinarily was only fit for a mule or donkey to pick her way. However, by 2 p.m. or thereabouts the Turks evacuated the position."

7th The 1/7th moved forward at 11.30 o'clock on the night of the 18th September from its bivouac area at El Muzeir'a to a point a mile in rear of the place of assembly, which was reached at 2.30 a.m. At 3.10 a.m. the Battalion marched to the jumping off place in rear of the 1/5th and the 162nd Machine Gun Company and formed in that order at 3.50 in lines of columns of half companies dressing by the left, the left of the Battalion dressing by the left rear of the 1/5th. The enemy had shown signs of uneasiness and upon arrival at the point of assembly a red Very light went up from his lines, followed by shelling both when the Battalions were forming up and whilst waiting for zero hour. This had little effect. The 162nd Machine Gun Company moved from the rear to the right of the 1/5th Essex and thus the 1/7th were close behind the attacking Battalion when it crossed the Wadi Miye at 4.30 a.m. The enemy put down a heavy barrage, which fell between the two units. This was followed by a lull caused by the opening of the British barrage and when the Turkish artillery again fired, their shells dropped in rear of the 1/7th. A casualty or two was caused by scattered rifle fire. Following the 1/5th Essex, the Battalion, in the strengthening dawn, moved north over Bureid Ridge and across the western slopes of Umm el Bureid. The 1/7th halted to allow the 1/5th to cross the Wadi Raba and to deploy. When the

latter were observed climbing the northern bank of the Wadi Raba and moving against the sangars on its summit, the Battalion, in two lines of platoons in single file, moved down the slopes of Umm el Bureid amidst light enemy fire and crossed the Wadi Raba. Ascending the hill, they were soon in close touch with the 1/5th Essex, who again pushed forward to the south of Kufr Qasim. From these points orders had been given to cover the final advance of the 1/5th Essex against Kufr Qasim, but when the high ground was reached, it was found that the leading men of that unit were already in the village. The 1/7th accordingly moved up about 6.50 a.m. in rear of Qasim Wood and lay down, with two companies ready to be deployed when word was given for the attack on Sivri Wood. A section of the 161st Machine Gun arrived at this time and a position was chosen in a corner of Kufr Qasim Wood, from which their four guns could bring fire to bear on two points on Sivri Tepe. Colonel de Lancey Forth, with the O.C. "C" and "D" Companies (Captain Seccombe), personally reconnoitred the best line of approach to Sivri Wood and found that the latter lay N.E., roughly 700 yards from the south-eastern corner of Qasim Wood, the ground sloping away very gently towards Sivri Wood. It was slightly high in the centre, but fell away gradually upon each side. From the outer edge of Sivri Wood the ground sloped more steeply to the wadi in the rear and only the cactus hedge in front could be seen by the troops in Qasim Wood, whilst at the back of all lay Hill 512, which dominated the whole position from the north. Emerging from Kufr Qasim it appeared by keeping a little to the east that the ground sloped sufficiently to give cover for some little distance from Hill 522 for men advancing to attack Sivri Wood, though no cover from Hill 512 or Sivri Wood. This was the line chosen for the advance of the two companies, but later on it was found that a machine gun posted far to the east enfiladed that side of the slope. The attack was timed for 7.35, but as the artillery fire appeared to have died down on the objectives in front (except on Sivri Tepe) and as he had seen no barrage on Sivri Wood or Hill 512, the Battalion commander delayed the attack for five minutes after it was due to emerge from Qasim Wood. However, neither Hill 512 nor Sivri Wood appeared to be shelled to any extent either before or after, although every effort was made by the F.O.O. to get into communication with the supporting batteries. Wires were so continually cut that it was found impossible. When the waves did advance the enemy's barrage hid Sivri Wood in smoke and dust and it was difficult to tell if the heavy bombardment took place from 7.40 a.m. to 7.50 a.m., but the Battalion commander did not think so. Crown Hill did not appear to be occupied when carefully searched with glasses, but it was subsequently ascertained that the 8th Hants were on a hill which they knew to be Crown Hill, almost east of Qasim Wood. At 7.40 a.m. "C" and "D" Companies moved from the south-eastern corner of Qasim Wood

to take Sivri Wood. They were in four waves, with the men extended four paces. As soon as the companies were clear of the wood they came under both frontal and enfilade fire and a heavy barrage also caught them. The men rushed forward, but could not go more than 200 yards. They were forced back within two or three minutes with the loss of nearly half the strength. The Machine Gun Company could not give full support, as their position was also the object of enemy fire. One of the supporting companies was ordered to reinforce the right of the attack, but before that could be done the advance had died away. The enfilade fire was so severe that the attack was stayed until Hill 512 could be assailed from the south-east. The enemy artillery was very active on Qasim Wood, a machine gun also playing on the outer edges of the wood. "A" and "B" Companies lined the latter, whilst "C" and "D" reorganized in the rear. Colonel de Lancey Forth endeavoured to get into touch with Brigade headquarters from the headquarters of the 1/5th by telephone, with the information that the attack could not develop from that direction, but it was only possible to inform the Brigade of the situation by visual signals. A long wait ensued and the Battalion commander then reported personally to the Brigade forward station a mile away. On hearing that the divisional reserve was moving against Hill 512 from the south-east and the 1/5th Essex against Sivri Tepe, Lieut.-Colonel Forth arranged to advance with the latter, but found that another battalion had already moved round the rear of Sivri Wood and Hill 512, from which the enemy had retired or had been ejected, and Sivri Tepe was found unoccupied. The 1/7th Essex then went on to Oghlu Tepe about 1 p.m. and held the line 512—Oghlu Tepe—Zakur (exclusive). When the order was given for "General Chase," one company was sent to Kh. Besailia, the remainder of the Battalion following after dark and bivouacking close to Kh. Besailia in Wadi Qana. The casualties were 19 other ranks killed, whilst three officers and 64 other ranks were wounded and six missing, a total of 89.

161st MACHINE GUN COMPANY'S PART IN THE BATTLE.

Major A. F. Harding, M.C., then commanding 161st Machine Gun Company, has contributed an account of the part played by his unit in the battle, in which, by way of preface, he regrets the loss of all his notes, reports, copies of orders, maps, etc., relating to the operations and so has been compelled to rely upon his memory, aided by the brief narrative contained in the records of the 54th Machine Gun Battalion. The task allotted to the 161st Machine Gun Company and the nature of the country made direct control by the Company Commander impossible. To a large extent, therefore, sections acted independently. The narrative proceeds: The machine gun plan for the attack of the 54th Division on the Turkish positions in the Judæan foothills

in September, 1918, was prepared by the O.C. 54th Machine Gun Battalion in consultation with the infantry and artillery commanders concerned. The role allotted to the 161st Company was that of "forward guns" in support of the attack of the 161st Brigade. The task of "forward guns" is to advance as closely as possible behind the leading infantry ready to come into action to help them overcome any resistance that may check their advance. During the early stages of an attack machine gun support can usually be provided by guns in position in or close behind the front line. As the advance progresses the increase in range makes the fire of these guns impossible or ineffective. It is then essential to have other guns forward to provide machine gun support for the infantry. It was this task that the 161st Company had to carry out. The chief essential for "forward guns" is mobility. Unless they can keep close behind the infantry they cannot give that quick support which is required to maintain the impetus of an advance. In this case the movement had to be carried out over a series of rocky ridges divided by deep valleys or wadis. The country generally was devoid of natural cover and the scattered rocks and boulders made progress slow. From the Bureid Ridge to the Kufr Qasim Ridge advancing troops were completely exposed to enemy observation and any attempt to move machine guns closely behind the infantry across this area on pack mules—the means of transport then in use—would have been very difficult and would probably have involved heavy animal casualties, which would to a great extent have immobilized sections and prevented the carrying out of their tasks. The only alternative was to man-handle the guns, ammunition, etc. The normal gun teams are only sufficient to man-handle the gun, tripod, spare parts and a small quantity of ammunition for a short distance, so additional men were required. These carrying parties were obtained from the battalions of the 161st Brigade. They trained, worked and lived with the sections for a short time beforehand to ensure that they knew their tasks and the men they were to work with. North of the Kufr Qasim Ridge the country seemed likely to afford more cover and it was arranged to try and send mules forward to help with the loads in the later stages of the advance. Successful action by forward machine guns depends on the initiative of section commanders and on their close co-operation with the attacking infantry. All that can be done beforehand is to lay down positions of deployment, general lines of advance and the units which the different sections are to support. It is obviously impossible to lay down positions to be taken up or targets to be engaged, as these depend on the progress made by the infantry and the resistance of the enemy. All the section officers of the 161st Company had had considerable experience of handling machine guns in war and could be relied upon to make the most of any opportunities that occurred. As regards co-operation with the infantry, the company was equally well placed, as it had been formed from the units of the 161st

Brigade, had worked with it for a considerable time and machine gun and infantry officers knew each other intimately. Sections were not placed under the direct command of infantry battalions, as it was thought that their initiative might be cramped. They were to act independently and it was hoped that they would thereby be in a better position to take advantage of the ground and of opportunities that arose for giving supporting fire where it was most needed. The detailed artillery plan was explained to section commanders and they were instructed to do their best to supplement the artillery barrages by direct overhead fire. The days immediately prior to the attack were spent in reconnaissance. The enemy's positions and the country were carefully studied from vantage points in our own line, maps and aeroplane photographs. Positions of assembly and deployment were selected. General lines of advance were chosen and allotted to sections. Possible positions were picked out from which the infantry could be supported at different stages of the attack. Probable enemy machine gun positions and centres of resistance were noted. Section officers kept in close touch with the units they were to support and made themselves acquainted with the infantry plans of attack. The equipment which the men were to wear was cut down as much as possible to compensate for the loads they had to carry and the distance that had to be covered to reach the final objective—the Wadi Qana. Every man was provided with a second water bottle, since it was realised that it would be impossible to refill the men's bottles during the fighting, and that more than one bottle would be required to keep the men going throughout a long, hot and tiring day. The extra water undoubtedly proved invaluable. On 18th September the 161st Company was in bivouac in the foothills a mile or two south of the Wadi Deir Ballut. Here the final preparations for the attack were made. The infantry advance was timed to start at 4.45 a.m. on 19th September and before that hour sections had to be formed up in their positions of deployment in No Man's Land on the forward slopes of the western end of Bureid Ridge. The Company left its bivouac at about midnight on the 18th and marched in column of route to an assembly position just north-east of Majdal Yaba. Here the guns, etc., were to be taken off the pack mules and carried by hand over the remaining few hundred yards to the positions of deployment. On this march forward the Company had a decided stroke of luck. After clearing the Wadi Deir Ballut a short halt was made to enable the column to close up and to give the men a short rest. While the Company was halted Turkish artillery opened fire on the ridge immediately behind which it had been decided to unload the mules. The bombardment was sharp but short and as soon as it was over the Company moved forward again. Had it come later or had there been no halt, it might have caused considerable confusion amongst the animals and possibly some casualties. As it was, the unloading was carried out undisturbed, sections moved to

their positions without a casualty, the animals were sent back to positions under cover and the whole deployment was carried out without a hitch. This was no small achievement when it is remembered that nearly a hundred pack mules had to be unloaded quietly in the dark. (I regret that I cannot remember the order in which sections deployed). Company headquarters were established at a point just behind the left of the general line of deployment of the sections where a view could be obtained of the first stage of the advance. Everyone was in position and ready well before zero hour. Under cover of the artillery barrage the infantry gained the Kufr Qasim ridge without difficulty and there was no need for any of the machine gun sections to come into action. Some machine gun covering fire was given during this part of the attack by the guns of the 162nd Company, which had come into action on Bureid Ridge, but the difficulty of seeing our own troops in the half light restricted the amount of firing. From 161st Company headquarters our sections could be seen struggling up the slope of the ridge close behind the infantry. Beyond Kufr Qasim our infantry was checked by Turks holding Sivri Wood and Sivri Tepe. All machine gun sections that could bring fire to bear on these places came into action and supported the infantry. The 161st Brigade fought its way forward from ridge to ridge supported by artillery and the fire of the guns of 161st Company. Section officers brought their guns into action wherever opportunities occurred to support the infantry. Where the nature of the ground made covering fire impossible guns were used to hold the ground gained. Fighting of this nature calls for the closest co-operation between machine guns and infantry. The success achieved goes to show that the sections of the 161st Machine Gun Company pulled their weight by providing supporting fire. As the advance continued, mules were sent forward and reached some sections in time to be of use. As long as fighting continued, however, guns moving into action had to be man-handled for considerable distances. Machine guns continued to support the infantry up to the final objective and finally took up positions to assist in holding the ground gained. Company headquarters were moved forward to the neighbourhood of Kefar Bara and arrangements were made to replenish ammunition and get food and water forward to sections. Casualties had been very light; a total of one killed, six wounded and two missing. This was mainly due to the careful way in which section officers made use of covered lines of advance and to the skill of the men in bringing their guns into action unobserved. The Turks were in no position to counter-attack and the night passed quietly. The next day 161st Machine Gun Company was concentrated and moved into bivouac with the 161st Brigade on the north bank of the Wadi Qana. There it remained for a few days until it marched north with the 161st Brigade group first to Haifa and then to Beirut. It did no more fighting. The success of the machine guns in this operation

depended on the initiative of section officers and the endurance of the men. Both were displayed in a very high degree. A great deal has been said already about the necessity for the former and the way in which it was forthcoming. The endurance and stamina of the men were wonderful and can only be fully appreciated by those who have tried carrying a Vickers machine gun, tripod or ammunition boxes in a hot climate. In a cool climate and over even ground in peace the distance these men carried their loads would have been remarkable. In a hot climate, over a series of ridges covered with rocks and boulders and under fire, it was an extremely fine performance.



ON TO BEIRUT.

The infantry had opened a way for the cavalry in the Coastal Sector and the pursuit was relentless. The Desert Mounted Corps were posted behind the 7th and 60th Divisions and, moving rapidly ahead, were through the gap by 9 a.m. and had possession of the Jelame-Hadera line—18 miles distant—by noon. Thence the 5th Cavalry Division pushed on and entered the Plain of Esdraelon at Abu Shushe, from which point the 13th Brigade proceeded to raid Nazareth and capture some of the headquarters staff of the Yilderim Army Group. The 14th Brigade seized El Affule. The 4th Cavalry Division, moving north-east, entered the Musmus Pass just ahead of a Turkish battalion, which it dispersed, and was in El Affule just half an hour after the 5th Division. Following it was the Australian Mounted Division, which had detached a brigade to Jenin. That town was reached at 5.30 p.m. and 8,000 prisoners were taken. Meanwhile, the 4th Cavalry Division had entered the valley of Jezreel and was at Beisan at 4.30 p.m., having ridden 85 miles in 34 hours. One regiment even went twelve miles farther on and took the bridges over the Jordan at Majami'. "Thus, within 36 hours while the infantry had broken and was following up the VIIIth and VIIth Turkish Armies, the cavalry had closed all their main roads of escape." By September 21st the British cavalry were in Nablus, whilst the XX Corps was on the Wadi el Far'a and XXI Corps in Samaria.¹ The enemy had ceased to be a cohesive force and was retreating rapidly, scourged by the constant bombing of the Royal Air Force, who caught a column in the Wadi el Far'a and destroyed it. Chaytor's force, on the right, were in Jisr ed Damiye on September 22nd and had thus isolated Amman, whilst the next day the 5th Cavalry Division were in possession of Haifa and had reoccupied Nazareth, followed later by the capture of Acre, famous in our history as the place where, over a century before, Sir Sydney Smith and a naval force stopped the advance of Bonaparte. The Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies practically ceased to exist. On the right the pressure upon Amman was so great that it was evacuated on September 25th, followed by the surrender, on September 28th, of the Turkish XII Corps, retreating north, which had suffered from repeated Arab attacks. The whole line was advancing rapidly. Orders were issued on September 25th

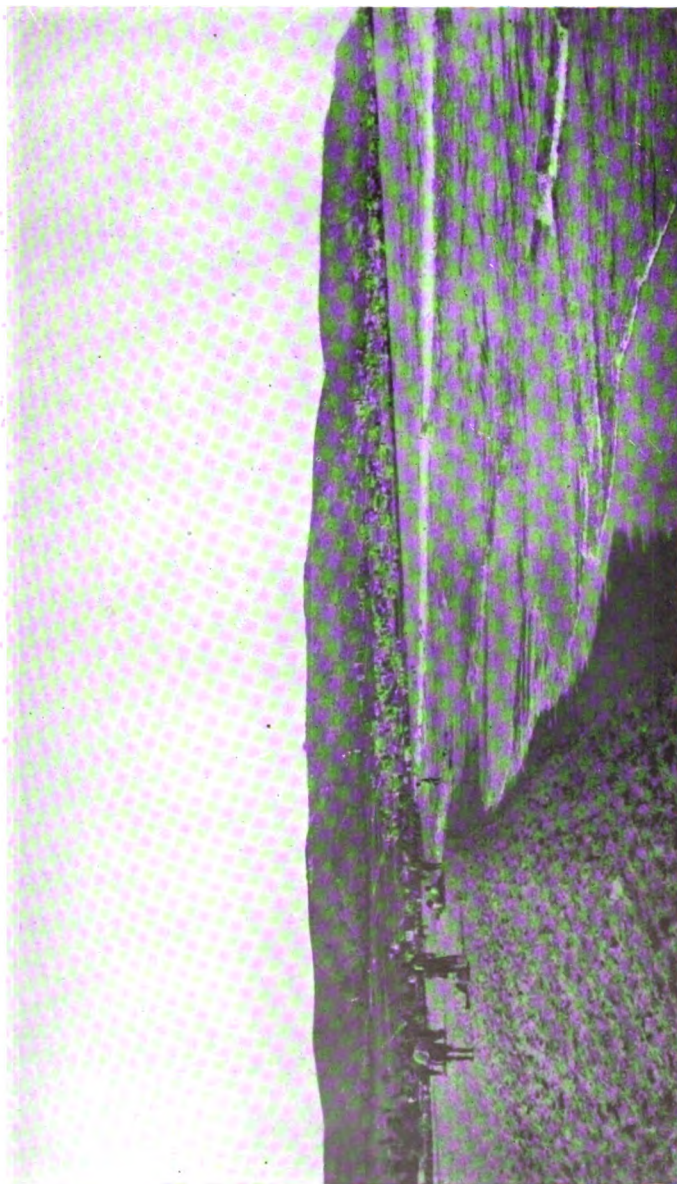
1. "The XXI Corps had completed one of the most overwhelmingly successful operations of the war, at a cost which must, in the circumstances, be considered light. The total casualties were 3,378, of whom only 446 of all ranks were killed. The captures were about 12,000 prisoners, 149 guns, vast quantities of ammunition, countless transport wagons. The whole of the Turkish Eighth Army, with the exception of the German and a few Turkish battalions of the Asia Corps, had been destroyed."—Official History, Vol. II, pp.509-510.

for the occupation of Damascus and in two columns the troops bore down upon the famous city. After much riding and fighting the Syrian capital was entered on October 1st, no fewer than 20,000 prisoners being taken. Still remorselessly pushing on, the port of Beirut was entered unopposed by the 7th Division on October 8th, the Desert Mounted Corps having occupied Riyaq and seized great quantities of stores. Homs and Tripoli were the next objects of attack. The former town was occupied by the 5th Cavalry Division on October 16th. Meanwhile, the 7th Division, followed by the 54th Division, continued the coast march, the leading brigade of the latter division reaching Beirut on October 31st. Aleppo was seized by the British cavalry on 26th October. The Bagdad railway was captured and junction thus effected with the Army in Mesopotamia, whilst the cavalry continued to press on with a view to capturing Alexandretta. An armistice was signed, however, on October 31st, and then "the front of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force was 360 miles from its starting point of six weeks earlier. In this period the marches of the 5th Cavalry Division had totalled 500 miles and it had expended 25 per cent. of its personnel and 21 per cent. of its horses."

The 161st Brigade concentrated in the Wadi Qana on September 20th and was engaged for a week in clearing the battlefield. On September 29th the Brigade marched, by way of Jaljulye, to the Qaqun area, a distance of about fourteen miles. The time taken was five and a half hours and a large number of men recently returned from hospital found the task in the heat most trying, for they were already tired with a long march from Lydda. The rout of the enemy was, however, so complete that no time was to be lost and on September 30th, along a soft, dusty road, the Brigade marched eleven miles to Kerkur and encamped by an oak forest—which had at one time almost covered the Plain of Sharon—with the ruins of Cæsarea almost in sight. The Brigade ended the month with a strength of 90 officers and 2,754 other ranks, as against a return at the beginning of the month of 108 officers and 3,277 other ranks. The reinforcements totalled 28 officers and 1,437 other ranks, but there was considerable sickness. The march was continued on October 2nd past the great quarries which had supplied the material for building Cæsarea—a journey of great fascination had the Brigade been on holiday tour and not in grim pursuit of the Turk. The Jewish colony of Zimmarin,¹ situated on a hill, with a tiresome, dusty road leading to it, was the bivouac and Colonel Gibbons remarks that the town was practically *en fete*. "Most of the Jewish maidens had put on their best frocks and marched up and down the High Street giving the glad eye to the Essex boys, but the latter were not visibly impressed." On October 3rd the Brigade reached the vicinity of 'Athlith, once the scene of obstinate combat between Cross and Crescent, and then on October 4th the Essex men bivouacked by the shores

1. The Hebrew name is Zikhron Ya'aqov.

of Haifa—another German colony—having first trudged round the foot of the famous Mount Carmel. The 161st marched through Haifa on October 7th and then bivouacked between Carmel and the Nahr el Muqatta'—the ancient brook Kishon. "Eight miles to the north, across the beautiful bay, Acre could be seen, shining white in the sunlight." The stay at Haifa lasted three weeks, but the rest was not as pleasant as anticipated, for there was much sickness. Scorpions swarmed everywhere at night and Colonel Gibbons mentions that one night in headquarters mess seventy were killed during and after dinner. The G.O.C. 54th Division (Major General Hare) presented the ribands of decorations won by officers and men of the Brigade. A move came on October 23rd to the eastern end of Haifa in an irritating gale of wind and sand and then on October 21st by the sea shore to Acre, where the Brigade encamped between the town and Tell el Fokhar. The Essex men had not long to explore the features of this city, linked so closely with great episodes in English history. Past the huge and ancient aqueduct, still in use, the Brigade reached Musheirefeh where good and plentiful water was found. Next morning the formidable Jebel el Mushaqqah, 1,200 feet high, presented a stiff climb, from which a splendid view of Acre was obtained, then by the coast road across the Wadi Ez Zerqa, leaving Khirbet el 'Amud, the old time Hamon, on the right. After a long descent, covered with ruins, the night was spent at Ras el Ain, where the great reservoirs still exist which supplied the ancient Tyre, of story and fable, lying five miles to the north. The Brigade did not enter Tyre, but passed it on the left and came to the River Qasimiye, or Litani, which struck Colonel Gibbons as very like a placid English river and "full of fish." After spending the night north of the river they marched on to Ain el Buraq, having tramped by Sarafand, where Elijah is said to have performed the miracle of raising the widow's son. Three hours' march the next day enabled the Brigade to enter Sidon, full, also, of memories of the past. The former comprised 83 officers and 2,020 other ranks, having decreased over 600 in strength during the month. The stay was short, for on October 31st, in fine weather, the Brigade still pushed on to the north, past orchards and the River Bostrenus, round the headland of Ras Jedra to El Jiye, known of old as Porphyriion, thence by Khan en Nabi Yunis, with its legend that in its vicinity Jonah was surrendered by the whale, and, finally, to the River Nahr ed Damur, where, at Ed Damur, the Brigade bivouacked. It had been a march of great moment, for during the course of it the news was received that the Turks had been granted an armistice and the war in Palestine was over. It was an occasion too deep for words and it has been recorded that the only outward manifestation of the relief of mind and body was an increase in the number of letters home telling of the good news. But the great trek northward continued, for Beirut had to be reached. Along the sea shore, on a hot, dusty



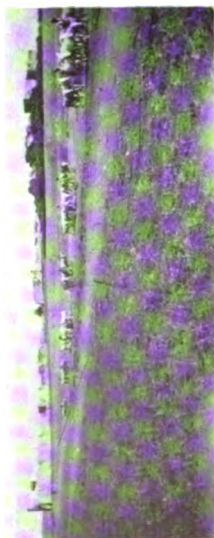
HAIFA & MOUNT CARMEL.



HELMIEH CAMP: Xmas Day, 1918.



YEHUDIYEH.



JILJULIEH : Donkey Corps.



BEIRUT : Officers of 11th Essex on arrival.

road, the Brigade pushed forward in the land of the Druses to El Hadeth, just outside the great port, and on the first anniversary of the third battle of Gaza, the Division marched through Beirut, with the 1/4th Essex leading the 161st Brigade. The Corps commander (Sir Edward Bulfin) took the salute in the square. Officers and men were both ragged and worn, but it was a great occasion, never to be forgotten by all who took part. It was of special significance to the remnant who could remember the landing in Gallipoli, the long vigil by the Canal, the desert march and the fighting round Gaza, the hurried advance to Jaffa, the tiresome wait on the 'Auja, and then the final push forward, which took the British Army to Beirut and victory.

The memories of the trek from Wadi Qana to Beirut left a vivid impression upon the transport officer of the 6th Essex (Lieut. W. F. Cook), who recalled that the first two days' marching proved "uninteresting and tiring, as for twenty miles it was along plains in which there was not a single well to supply us with water. The soil was parched and cracked, but after we left Tul Karm the going was better. We made for the coast route and after leaving the interesting village of Zimmarin—high up on the hill, overlooking the plains we had just marched over—we journeyed by quick stages to Haifa. We camped on the beach south of the town, but the water was so foul that we shifted again to a plain north-east of the place, where we attempted to have another rest. Perhaps we should have rested, but the scorpions and other discomforts of the place got on our nerves a bit. I tried riding schools, bathing parties, etc., to cheer up things in the transport field, but the place was hopeless. Once again I was glad to get marching orders for the trek to Beirut in spite of the bad reports of the roads for transport. On the night before our move we had a terrible thunderstorm, which seemed as if it had been pent up for months. Mount Carmel looked glorious when lit up by flashes of lightning, but the glories were soon forgotten, as the rain worked its way through our flimsy bivouac sheets. As one got wetter I thought how heavy the kit would be when we started! The beach was a bad take-off for the fully-loaded wagons, but eventually we got near the edge of the sea, where the sand was wet, and we reached Acre in good form the same day. Unfortunately, it rained again and the dry, cracked soil became a sticky mess. The sun dried it up again very quickly, but we had the discomfort, especially in the morning, when we moved off with the beastly stuff clinging to wheels and boots in a most tenacious manner. It was a hard journey until we reached the vicinity of Tyre, for there are no roads south of this place. It seemed as if the hill which juts out into the sea had proved too much hitherto for any transport except camels and donkeys. However, we had to cross it with all our wagons and it took us a whole day. An interval of a hundred yards separated each wagon as it went up the long mountain side. A hasty inspection was made of wheels and brakes by a much worried

transport officer and twelve men with drag ropes went up with each wagon. I came along with the last and with the camels behind we had no trouble at all. Soon after leaving Tyre we struck a fairly good metalled road and I was very glad, for it had been very hard work, indeed, but the jolting on the road caused a broken perch pole at Sidon and while the Battalion was miles ahead I was hard at work again hammering a new pole into position. When I eventually reached the camping ground I found to my horror that the Battalion was in bivouac on the other side of the hill—up which no wagon could get! We took them up as far as we could and then left them. The animals were taken miles away and that night I thought my troubles would never cease. We were to make a ceremonial entry into Beirut and all packs and heavy kit were dumped so that the men would march light. The journey to the town, through it and thence to the camping ground was a long one. The transport officer was, of course, responsible for clearing up the ground and bringing up everything to the new area. While clearing up this camping place I left my tunic on the ground and when I came to put it on I found that some kind Arab had helped himself to the contents of my pockets, including my cigarette case with £10 in notes inside. This I recovered two days later by a lucky search of the native camel-drivers. We eventually chose a site for a camp about two miles out of Beirut and from October 31st onwards we rested, and it was a welcome rest, too. The men were exhausted and could not be called upon to do arduous duties. We had just settled nicely down on the terraced slopes under the Lebanon Hills when down came the rain and as the rain poured from the hills it turned each terrace wall into a muddy cascade. Very wet and miserable, we found new quarters higher up the hill under the pine trees, but after the heat the men could not stand the exposure to such rough weather. In a very short time we were reduced to 15 officers and about 150 men! My transport section was stronger in numbers than any company. Even then I only had just enough men to lead the animals to water when taking four mules each! Malaria and pneumonia set in so badly that the hospitals in Beirut were full to overflowing and fresh cases arriving by ambulance had to be left in the courtyards. We lost many men who had been with us throughout the campaign. I got rid of as many anæmic animals as I could, for there was nobody to attend to them. Then on November 11th we heard of the general armistice. Turkey had given in to us on the day we entered Beirut and so to a certain extent we were prepared for it, but we were afraid to be overjoyful. We fired many Very lights in a most extravagant manner, which the Quartermaster charged up to the company commanders when the shortage was reported to him later. In the town the natives went mad with childish excitement. Ancient muskets were fired into the air and a gesticulating crowd assembled near the harbour and sang unintelligible chants!"

4th There is little more to tell. The 1/4th Essex at the end of October had a ration strength of 22 officers and 403 other ranks and an effective strength of 23 officers and 510 other ranks. During the month two officers and 188 other ranks were admitted to hospital, the majority suffering from influenza and sore feet. Apart from these troubles, the health of the Battalion was good and the supply of medical stores was normal. There was a good deal of inoculation against cholera. Rations were composed entirely, with the exception of one day, of tinned beef, with biscuits in lieu of bread for part of the time. The transport was in good condition, "excepting several large draft mules, which are old, and of which the Battalion appears to possess a larger number than other units." The Battalion found the bivouac on the slope of a rocky hill at Ed Damur, on the outskirts of Beirut, on November 1st, to be the worst they had experienced. The transport had to be left a mile or so away, as there was no room for it upon the road. This circumstance also very much curtailed the time available for cleaning up for the march past the Corps commander. The 1/4th led the Brigade at the review on November 2nd, with the bugle band at the head. Influenza was again rife in November and the medical arrangements were severely tested.

5th The 1/5th Essex were visited by the Brigade commander (Brigadier-General Orpen Palmer) early on September 20th, who informed them of the completeness of the British victory. A better idea of this welcome fact was obtained a few hours later when the Battalion moved to a site in the Wadi Qana, where a Brigade camp was formed. All around was the discarded military material which the Turks had had to leave behind. The marksmanship of the British gunners had been very accurate. Many direct hits had been obtained and many other shells fell so near that the gun crews must have suffered severely. The stay in the Wadi would have been a very happy one had it not been for the prevalence of fever. All ranks caught the infection. "We were living," wrote an officer, "on ground which had been occupied by the Turks, who had their own ideas of sanitation. They had not troubled to deal with mosquitoes and other pests as we had. I inspected a former enemy observation post one day and returned in agony, being nearly alive with insects and seriously bitten. For these reasons we were not sorry to get on the move, particularly as it appeared certain that we should march through interesting country. When orders came for the long trek all ranks felt pleased, especially as it would take them nearer to the sea, where it would be cooler." The 1/5th Essex found marching easier, having a drum and fife band to help it along. "Everyone who took part in this march," said an observer, "must have been amazed at the great numbers of prisoners whom we saw being conducted in the direction of the British lines. We seemed to see this procession for days and it proved to us how great had been the British victory. The

march was not too comfortable, at times, owing to the heat during the day and the fact that all ranks were wearing steel helmets. I can vividly remember the headache occasioned by riding up and down the column in a blazing sun wearing a 'tin hat'. Whilst the 1/5th were in bivouac at Kerkur on October 1st a slight earthquake shock was felt. A curious trembling of the earth was noticed by all ranks. It was accompanied by an unusual noise made by a rushing wind. As most of the fields in the vicinity were cultivated, the latter was distinctly heard. The movement was over in a moment, but it was a decidedly novel experience. When at the end of October the Battalion reached Ed Damour, near Beirut, it had 18 officers and 512 other ranks, although when it started there were 21 officers and 754 other ranks. After General Bulfin's inspection on November 2nd the Battalion occupied bivouacs at Mar Rukos and was there until the close of the month. Colonel Gibbons records that the Battalion band stole a march on the others by playing the "Marseillaise" when passing the French Consulate at Beirut, and were heartily cheered in consequence.

6th The War Diary of the 1/6th records no incident of importance on the march.

7th The 1/7th Battalion was also content with a list of place names. Major A. U. Crossley was in command. The Battalion sent 11 officers and 158 other ranks to hospital during October and at the end of that month had an effective strength of 26 officers and 536 other ranks, which rapidly diminished during November, for there were left on the 30th 18 officers and 388 other ranks, nearly 200 having reported sick.

BACK IN EGYPT.

The stay at Beirut was not long, nor was it very pleasant. Turkey's armed resistance had ceased and the men's minds were fixed upon demobilization and the Homeland, whilst the strain of the campaign and the arduous conditions under which it was waged were revealed by the constant passage of all ranks to hospital. Moreover, want and disease had woefully thinned the population in and about Beirut and whilst the Brigade—which at the end of November had a strength of 68 officers and 1,509 other ranks—was in occupation the effects of starvation were made painfully apparent. The weather was also none too kind, so that though some effort was made to provide sport, it was with obvious relief that orders were received for the return to Egypt. At first it was proposed to march back to the railhead, many miles in the rear, but there was a welcome alteration and the return journey to Egypt was made by sea. The port of disembarkation was Qantara, which was the infantry base depot. All 161st details, as they reported from hospital or leave in the latter part of November and the early days of December, were retained at Qantara, because it was known that the Brigade was returning to Egypt. These details were formed



Infantry of 34th Division marching past G.O.C., Lord Allenby, CAIRO, December, 1918.

into a battalion, with officers and men of each first line battalions in separate companies. Thus "A" Company (Captain Bittles) was 4th Essex, "B" Company, 5th Essex, and so on. Major Sheldon (6th Essex) was commanding officer and Captain Finn was adjutant. This provisional battalion was responsible for seeing that the camps were in order to accommodate the units returning from Syria. The Brigade quickly moved on from Qantara to Hilmiya, where the Desert had been turned into an enormous camp. The march of the 54th Division and other troops through Cairo on December 20th—Sir Edmund Allenby taking the salute—was a magnificent exhibition of British military efficiency. "It was intended to impress the Egyptians," wrote one who took part, "but many of us were surprised to note that we were not welcomed in the native quarters, where the sound which was equivalent to the English hiss was frequently heard."

Now for the last war stories of the Battalions.

- 4th The 1/4th Essex were at Mar Rukos, just outside Beirut, where the adverse weather conditions were rendered more trying by an outbreak of influenza. The excitement following the announcement of the Armistice quickly died down and the War Diary records, "The days are generally of great monotony now. Everyone is looking forward to one thing only—return to England." At the end of the month the ration strength had been reduced to 19 officers and 203 other ranks. Nearly 200 of all ranks had been admitted to hospital, suffering mostly from influenza, and the influx of cases almost caused a breakdown of the medical arrangements. On November 30th an advance party, consisting of Captain R. A. Reddie and 2nd Lieut. Bradshaw and 24 other ranks, embarked on s.s. Tagus to proceed to Egypt and they were followed on December 2nd by the rest of the Battalion, who made an excellent passage. That night the 1/4th bivouacked near by the Swing Bridge, on the west side of the Canal, and then, next day, entrained for Hilmiya, near to Cairo, which was reached at 3.20 a.m. on December 4th. The men were mainly employed in making pathways in the camp, for which the O.C. 54th Division D.A.C. expressed his appreciation. There was a general holiday on December 17th and there was much subsequent preparation for the celebrated march past of the Division in Cairo on December 20th, when the Commander-in-Chief reviewed his victorious army. There was a church parade on Christmas Day, and all ranks enjoyed an excellent dinner; altogether the most cheerful festival since the mobilization. "B" Company was moved to Bilbeis on December 27th and then on December 29th the Battalion took over Kasr en Nil barracks in Cairo. The month of January was spent in the Egyptian capital and all ranks found the duty very heavy, for it allowed little other work to be done. A certain amount of educational training was carried on and evening classes were held. Health was, however, good and discipline well maintained, whilst all ranks thoroughly appreciated the comforts of garrison

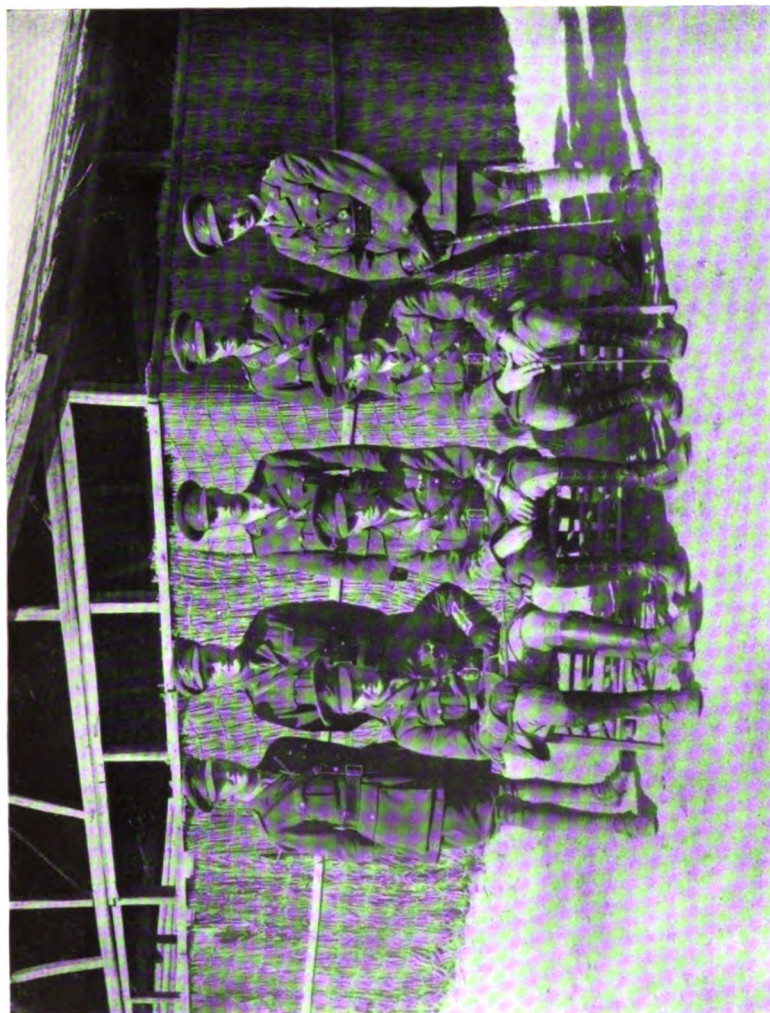
life after the long spell of active service. Several games of football were played and concerts were organized, but what was not enjoyed was the heavy rain in the middle of the month, which found its way into nearly every room in the barracks. General Sir W. Wilcocks, K.C.M.G., lectured upon his three and a half years' work in Mesopotamia. The last entry in the War Diary is dated January 30th, 1919, and just briefly mentioned that a concert was held by the "Airscrews."

5th The 1/5th Essex embarked on the transport "Tagus," on December 2nd, with the transport section on s.s. "Ekaterinoslav," and reached Qantara on December 4th. Thence they marched to Transit Camp and on December 6th reached Hilmiya Camp, near Cairo, where they remained until the end of the month. The stay was notable for the march past in Cairo. At the beginning of December the strength was 17 officers and 444 other ranks, but the return of convalescent and details brought the total at the end of the month to 39 officers and 1,070 other ranks. Demobilization drafts were despatched to the number of four officers and 88 other ranks, in January, 1919, whilst the remainder were kept fit by route marching and interested in lectures on various subjects. Classes were held in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, bookkeeping, shorthand, arithmetic, and building construction. The personnel of the Trench Mortar Battery rejoined on January 2nd upon disbandment of the Battery. Picquets were supplied in Cairo, one of four officers and 100 other ranks and an inlying picquet of four officers and 120 other ranks. There was a slight decline in strength at the end of January from 39 officers and 1,100 other ranks to 35 officers and 1,030 other ranks. Those who left for demobilization were principally students, who returned to complete their education, and employers and "key" men in industry and commerce. Among them was Sergeant G. A. Frisby, who had been Orderly Room Sergeant for nearly two years. He was originally selected in 1917, when, a vacancy occurring, company commanders were asked to recommend suitable men. Captain Colvin responded with Private Frisby, because that officer had observed, when censoring letters, that Frisby had written home for his copy of "History of European Morals." This he deemed a recommendation and so it proved to be. Sergeant Frisby was an excellent orderly room clerk and was so highly thought of that when he left the Battalion the officers invited him to the mess the night before he sailed and presented him with an inscribed silver salver. The weather early in 1919 was delightful and there was plenty to amuse with cinemas, bands, concert parties, lectures, sports and athletics. Horse racing enthusiasts went to Gezira or Heliopolis on Saturdays and there were many reunion dinners in Cairo. One day some of the Battalion ran across Captain Bridges, Staffordshire Regiment, who had been Adjutant in England and served in a similar capacity for a time in Gallipoli. He was on his way to join the Egyptian Army in

the Sudan and all the 1/5th officers who were with him in England dined as his guests that night. "It seems rather strange," wrote an officer, "that so long after the Armistice as January 30th we should have gone on the range for musketry, but this actually happened. Perhaps the authorities scented trouble with the Egyptians, which was undoubtedly brewing."

6th During November the 1/6th Essex found guards in Beirut and then supplied parties for road-making and loading Turkish ordnance stores. The bivouac was at first Mar Rukos, but later in the month it was changed to a spot 500 yards north-west of the old site. A detachment was sent to the 271st Brigade, R.F.A., for temporary duty owing to the shortage of artillery personnel. The first active step for the return was made when Lieut. D. M. Walmsley and a sergeant were sent to Beirut docks for duty concerned with the embarkation of the Division for Egypt. 2nd Lieut. J. E. Lacey and 24 other ranks comprised the Battalion advance party, which embarked on s.s. "Tagus" on November 30th. Then on December 2nd the Battalion, less regimental transport, marched to Beirut docks and at mid-day went on board the "Tagus," sailing for Egypt two hours later. Lieut. W. F. Cook and 35 other ranks, with the regimental transport and riding horses, were taken on board the "Ekaterinoslav," but did not sail until next day. The Battalion arrived at Port Said on December 3rd and left soon after mid-day for Kantara East, where it disembarked at 8 a.m. on December 4th and proceeded to Transit Camp on the west bank of the Suez Canal to await entrainment for Hilmiya. The loading of the transport has been vividly described by Lieut. W. F. Cook: "My animals were the first on board the 'Ekaterinoslav' and it was about 6 p.m. when we pushed the last one of my section up the gang plank. The last animal was slung aboard about midnight and the cranes were used all night to load the baggage. Of course, there was more than there was room for in the holds and, in consequence, it had to be crammed in as best we could do. What a mess was made of it by the labourers who were in the hold packing it! Wagons were loaded on the jetty and things were packed one on top of the other, the contents being scattered in all directions. However, we sailed next day at noon and were soon busy on our new duties, with the animals down in the holds. Our grub was as good as ship's grub always is—plenty of variety and admirably served. How very different from the fare on land! We arrived at Qantara four days later and had no trouble disembarking. We unloaded the animals in record time and soon put them on the train for Cairo. Nobody worried about the baggage, which was being unloaded by a staff officer. We wished him good luck in his job and moved off! Our train travelled all night and we reached the station of Hilmiya about 7 a.m., two days after the Battalion had arrived. They were very worried over us, as they had taken no baggage with them and the weather was very cold

indeed. We relied upon the Y.M.C.A. for our food for the first two days and then received the report that the baggage had arrived at the station siding. I went down with the Brigade convoy and I shall never forget the sight that met my eyes. Even before and during an action I had been used to removing hastily formed dumps, but this one beat all. We sorted it out into battalions and when we got ours in our lines we had another sorting parade until at last we each got something that belonged to us. However, we did not worry, for we were near Cairo and we were keener on buying articles of use for our civilian life to come than replenishing our military kit, which we were tired of humping about from place to place." All through December officers and men were returning to the Battalion, on one day no fewer than eight officers and 25 other ranks reporting for duty. The Battalion was, therefore, in full strength when it marched past the Commander-in-Chief at Cairo. During January there were constant transfers to the demobilization camp. Education classes were held daily—French, shorthand and bookkeeping—but it was not easy to attract the interest of men who were looking homeward. When each batch paraded for demobilization they were inspected to see that they were provided with money and kit and then everybody turned out to accompany them to the station. "There was always an exultant feeling in us," wrote an officer, "as we returned, for one thought of the happy day when we should be similarly feted, especially those of us who had not had any leave to England for three years and who were allowing the miners and farm labourers to go first for the sake of the country. We used to go back to the mess and drink our healths and to the time when we should see our dear old Blighty again! This was in December and few of us thought that nearly a year would elapse before it was our turn. However, we anticipated a happy Christmas and everything possible was done to make it a success. Cairo was well stocked with good things—the canteens had nearly everything possible to eat in tins—and our mess funds, which had accumulated on active service, were available to spend on food. The N.C.O.'s and officers waited on the men on the great day and we had enough pudding and beer to give each a large helping. Even the pudding, which I held aloft, was all ablaze as in the good old style on such a festive occasion. After everybody was served we went off to have our own feast." The Battalion moved from Hilmiya to Abbasiya early in February and delay ensued in demobilization because of the shortage of shipping. In March the Battalion supplied two companies for garrison work in the citadel and the remainder were employed on police duty in Cairo. Then further demobilization was cancelled because of Egyptian unrest. At first it was confined to stone-throwing and then to assault upon single soldiers, culminating in some cases in murder. As a consequence, men were employed on armoured and light cars, lorry patrols and on outpost duties at the police stations. It



161st M.G.Co., EGYPT, 1919.

Standing (left to right): Lieut. G. R. Woods, Lieut. J. C. Daniels, 2nd Lieut. W. J. Shea, Lieut. B. M. Miller
and Lieut. R. J. Collins,
Sitting (left to right): Capt. P. Wilson, Capt. C. Nechell, M.C., Lieut. J. N. Coker, M.C.

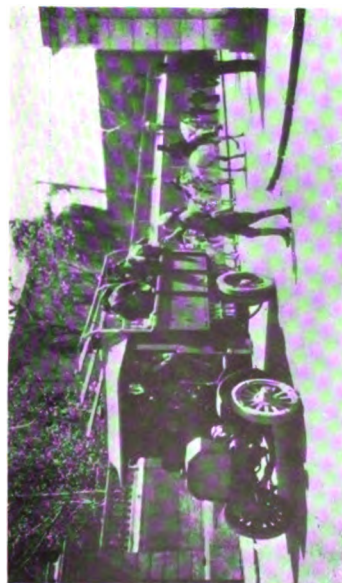
was a great change from the monotony of garrison duty and speedily had a good effect. In June, 1919, demobilization started again and after the Battalion had been concentrated in Qasr en Nil barracks those who had volunteered for service with the army of occupation were transferred to the 1/4th Essex and from that time 1/6th Essex ceased to exist as an active service unit.

7th The 1/7th Essex encamped west of the Beirut-Jisr Rustem Pasha road during the month of November, with a strength which at the end of the month had declined to 18 officers and 388 other ranks. On December 2nd the Battalion embarked on the "Tagus" and "Ekaterinoslav" for Qantara and disembarked on the 4th, when it left Qantara West for Hilmiya. The Battalion was represented at the thanksgiving service at the Sporting Club, Gezira, by an officer and 29 other ranks and, of course, marched through Cairo (Major Crossley in command) on December 20th, on the occasion of the inspection by Sir Edmund Allenby. The strength on December 31st was 35 officers and 1,214 other ranks, of whom 24 officers and 737 other ranks had returned from hospital. Seven officers and 39 other ranks had left on demobilization. During January, 1919, considerable attention was paid to educational classes, and the subjects taught were elementary and advanced French, bookkeeping, mathematics, shorthand and English, whilst a few men were sent to classes held by other battalions in Arabic, Spanish, building construction, commercial subjects, Hindustani and petrol engines. Three men were temporarily attached to the Nile Mission Press with a view to refreshing their knowledge of printing. All other ranks not engaged in educational instruction underwent light military training and attended lectures of civilian and general interest. At the end of the month, when the War Diary officially closed, signed by Major F. S. Hammond, there were 15 officers and 1,194 other ranks present. Two officers and 86 other ranks had been demobilized during January.

M.G. For the march to Beirut each of the M.G. Companies was attached to its respective Brigade group. Thus the 161st M.G. Company marched with the 161st Brigade Group. On arrival at Beirut, however, each M.G. Company returned to the 54th M.G. Battalion, which was encamped in the neighbourhood of Mar Rukos. Owing to the bad weather and the 'flu epidemic every effort was made to billet as many of the officers and men as possible in neighbouring houses. On the 4th December the M.G. Battalion, less the transport, embarked on H.T. "Ellenga" for Qantara, the transport following in the "Hunslet." On the 7th December the Battalion arrived at Cairo and camped at Hilmiya. About this time the commanding officer (Lieut.-Colonel Pigot Moodie) was taken ill. Major A. F. Harding, M.C., commanding 161st M.G. Company, therefore, assumed command of the Battalion and Captain C. Needell took over the 161st M.G. Company, with Captain P. Wilson as second-in-command. During the trouble with the native population in Egypt certain

sections of the M.G. Company were sent out on detachment with the infantry battalions, while other sections formed motor machine gun patrols. These latter sections had light Ford lorries, in each of which a gun was mounted. The motor patrols not only patrolled in the streets of Cairo, but they also carried out patrols across the desert to neighbouring oases. Of the personnel who originally formed the 161st M.G. Company at Shallufa in April, 1916, three officers (Captain C. Needell, M.C., Lieut. J. N. Coker, M.C., and 2nd Lieut. W. J. Shea) and 88 other ranks were still serving with the Company in January, 1919, when demobilization began.





Egyptian Rebellion, 1919. Egyptian Mounted and Foot Police and Men of 6th Essex on duty.



Egyptian Rebellion, 1919. Soldier of 6th Essex guarding G.P.O., CAIRO.



Egyptian Rebellion, 1919, CAIRO. Men of 6th Essex guarding wagon.



Soldier of 6th Essex guards Egyptian Convicts who were employed cleaning Cairo streets.

THE EGYPTIAN RISING OF 1919.

The last months of the stay of the Essex Territorials in the Near East were occupied with protection duty during the Egyptian rising of 1919. The following account is supplied by Captain J. F. Finn, M.C., of service with the 1/5th Essex and is typical of the work done by each Battalion :—

I suppose that few, if any, of those who served East with the Essex Infantry Brigade had ever studied Egyptian politics. I know I had not, although in a book read during 1917 I had noted a criticism of that class of Egyptians who became professional politicians. Certainly during the war none of us had become aware that the Egyptians had national grievances and up to the time of the Armistice those of us who had served in the front line and had only spent short periods in Egypt had found everything there quite peaceful.

After we had settled at Hilmiya, a suburb of Cairo, in December, 1918, we began to hear rumours of various kinds. One was that the natives were very sore about the defeat of the Turks, for it will be realized that there was a feeling of comradeship between the Egyptians and the Turks. The other was that the uneducated natives believed that Turkey had beaten Britain and that the presence of enormous bodies of troops in their country was due *not* to the return of a victorious army, but to the withdrawal of a defeated force ! The third was that the educated Egyptians were setting up a claim to self-government. Personally, I can claim to have noted only two things bearing upon the discontent which apparently was rife. The first was that we received reports during this time of a number of attacks by natives upon British soldiers when the latter were by themselves or in couples. The second was on the occasion (December 20th, 1918) of the march of the complete, and strong numerically, 54th Division from Hilmiya through Cairo. For this we had to pass through the squalid native area before reaching the saluting point in Opera Square. The route here was lined with Egyptian police and the side streets abutting on the road along which we passed were packed with natives. From time to time they greeted us with the Egyptian equivalent of a hiss and this gave me the inkling that we were not popular.

However, we carried on quietly and pleasantly with our post-armistice occupations until about March 9th, 1919. Trouble broke out on a Sunday with a native demonstration, led by students, in Opera Square, and riots in other parts of Cairo. All leave was stopped, to our great surprise, and we were ordered to send armed parties of officers, N.C.O's and men to various places around Hilmiya. Even then we did not anticipate any

great trouble or long interruption of the pleasant form of living which had so far marked 1919. The idea of Egyptians being really troublesome when a huge force of British, Australian and West Indian troops of all arms was there seemed really laughable—in fact, we did laugh at it. Matters continued thus for about three days. The parties who were despatched for daily duty told us on return that all electric trams had armed escorts upon them and that railway stations and public buildings were guarded. It really seemed that affairs were rather unsettled. Then about March 12th matters became more serious. The 11th Londons, who were encamped alongside us, received orders in the morning to strike camp and proceed to Zeitun railway siding to entrain for the provinces. The move was made in very quick time and we had hardly got over the surprise when orders came that we were to strike camp immediately and prepare to entrain. This was done rapidly, for it must be remembered that though we had collected our full kit and equipment we were not encamped under "peace time conditions." A small nucleus was left behind with the heavier baggage. The remainder of the Battalion proceeded to the station, where they found a number of the divisional staff officers. They told us that we were bound for Benha, the principal town of the Qalyubiya Province, where there were railway and road bridges over the Nile. It is a very important cotton-growing centre and a railway junction where the lines meet from Alexandria in one direction and Port Said in the other, on their way to Cairo. The staff told us that the 11th Londons had gone to Tanta (in the Nile Delta area). They had detained amidst a demonstrating Egyptian population and had immediately become involved in a skirmish.

We anticipated trouble, especially as we were greeted by hostile cries from people alongside the railway line near Cairo. We were surprised, therefore, to find Benha quiet. It seemed very different from the European quarter of Cairo. The only people about appeared to be the groups of natives, seated outside the rather squalid cafés. These people paid little attention to us and yet many of them must have been discussing their plans for the mischief they later endeavoured to make. Acting on instructions from G.H.Q., the superintendent of the police conducted us to an empty house, a palace formerly occupied by one of the princesses of the late reigning house. Two days later we sent four officers and 100 O.R.'s to Tanta to reinforce the 11th Londons, who had much to do in that hot-bed of sedition. All bridges were guarded, but everything seemed quiet. There was, however, a peculiar atmosphere about the place, an atmosphere which I noted then and during the 1920 troubles. It was as though the concentrated rebellious thoughts of thousands were affecting the ether. It has to be experienced to be realized.

On the morning of March 15th the Railway Transport Officer at Benha sent an urgent message asking that an officer and a detachment of men should be sent to guard the station. I remember that I uttered some uncomplimentary things about

"wind up," but, acting on the C.O.'s orders, the party was sent promptly. Shortly afterwards the Mudir (Governor) of the Qalyubiya province (H.E. Mahmoud Sidky Bey) drove up to our headquarters in a carriage and asked Colonel Gibbons to send troops to Qalyub, a station between us and Cairo, where a mob had burnt the station and damaged the permanent way. Colonel Gibbons refused to reduce his own garrison and went to Irrigation House, where the nearest telephone was, to communicate with Cairo. I got on my horse and rode into the town to see what was being done with our detachment at the railway station. I was unarmed and had no one with me and was, therefore, a little concerned, when entering the street in which the station was situated, to find it crowded with thousands of natives, many bearing banners and most of them uttering cries. There was nothing for it but to ride through them, so I did so, spurring my horse and dashing through before they could decide to prevent me. A fast moving horse was apparently too much for the crowd and all that happened was that I had mud thrown at me. I found that the R.T.O. had acted excellently in placing armed men every ten yards or so along the station and permanent way in both directions. Every railway station between us and Cairo was wrecked that day and I fully believe that an intention to treat Benha similarly was frustrated by the presence of troops there. As I felt that something must be done to deal with the demonstration, I left the station as quickly as possible and found that the natives had moved on to the shopping and café area of the town. As I neared this I heard the sound of much glass being broken and wood ripping, so I made a detour and went to the police station. From there I rang up the Mudir and reported what was happening. He replied, "Our police are dealing with the matter." I then hastened to our headquarters and reported to Colonel Gibbons. He ordered three officers and 50 men to "stand to" and proceeded to Irrigation House. Apparently the Mudir, having been apprised by me of the trouble, felt that if the troops were not called in he might be held to blame. He, therefore, proceeded to Colonel Gibbons and asked for help. Our picquet, under Captain Portway, marched into the town and broke up the demonstration by means of pick helves, and not a shot was fired. The thousands of demonstrators had confined their attention to the Greek, Armenian and Jewish shops and cafés. These we found afterwards had been marked with signs in chalk. Not a place belonging to anyone else had been touched. (There were, of course, no British shops, the only English person living in Benha being the wife of the Maltese bank manager).

When I was riding through I noticed that the Egyptian police were not interfering with the rioters and this was observed by our picquet. On hearing this, Colonel Gibbons decided to take over the maintenance of order and a strong picquet was established at the police station. From this point regular patrols were

sent out to all parts of the town and an order was issued that none was to be outside his house between dusk and daybreak. Another detachment of troops was also encamped near the railway station so as to afford complete protection there. Some days later a Government office which covered the approach to the station was taken over and a machine gun post established there. That evening a large party of Greeks, led by the principal cotton merchant of the town, asked for protection and from that time onwards sentries were posted in the houses occupied by all Greeks, on the Anglo-Egyptian bank and other places belonging to Europeans. These vigorous steps seemed to convince the Egyptians that Great Britain's representatives did not propose to stand any nonsense and the native officials began at once to endeavour to impress us with their loyalty and desire to preserve order. Not many of us were deluded in this way. However, Battalion headquarters had not much time to think about other people's motives at this time, for all the news which reached us, and it was not very plentiful, was of rioting and pillage all around. Messages came by telephone and verbally from many isolated European civilian units in the Delta area praying for troops to be sent, but we could do nothing. We had an important town to look after. The inhabitants of small native villages around did their bit towards promoting Egyptian independence by looting trains, breaking railway signal lamps, etc. In fact, for many weeks after order was restored it was impossible to run trains at night owing to the fact that there was not enough glass in the country to repair the lamps broken. All communication by rail was, of course, cut off, but aeroplane messages were received from G.H.Q. One of these instructed a military purchasing officer who was in our district to buy supplies of meat, etc., locally, as rations could not be sent. Another received the day after the riots was that Brigadier-General McNeill would arrive at dusk with a mounted column. On his arrival he and his staff assumed command of a large area of the Delta district and Colonel Gibbons became Commandant of Benha and was responsible for the administration of martial law. The mounted column patrolled the roads around the town and greatly assisted in preventing disorder.

Thus we began the second phase of the Egyptian rising. It may be mentioned that the principal British officers concerned in the Benha riots had their account of the happenings taken down in writing at a later date and were summoned to appear before a Government Committee of Enquiry in late August, 1919. I was the only one left in the country at the time and I duly appeared for examination at the Ministry of Interior.

From the third week in April the 1/5th Battalion The Essex Regiment was stationed as follows: Battalion Headquarters and main portion of Regiment at Benha, with Colonel Gibbons, O.C. Town. We guarded railway stations, all important railway and road bridges and houses of various Europeans. The town

was also regularly patrolled, a large picquet living in tents outside the police stations for this purpose. A machine gun post (provided from the 161st Machine Gun Company) also commanded the road leading to the railway station. A detachment of the Battalion, under Major Willmott, was at Quweisna Railway Station (the next to Benha in the direction of Alexandria). This guarded the station and was also there in case rioters should endeavour to release Turkish officer prisoners of war from the local encampment. Another 1/5th detachment protected the next railway station (name forgotten) and a party, under Captain Carlyon Hughes, was in charge of an armoured train, which travelled over a considerable area. The only means at first of the commanding officer visiting these detachments was when the Battalion Medical Officer (Captain Frew, now in practice at Chadwell Heath, Essex) made his daily visits in a motor ambulance. The Brigadier (General McNeill) and his staff were stationed at Irrigation House, Benha. The above-mentioned guards and patrols maintained order and enforced the two military restrictions, which were (1) against travelling by road or rail without a permit, and (2) against being out of doors after dusk. People doing either of these things were arrested and tried before Colonel Gibbons at the local police station.

The large number of natives who were arrested for their participation in the raid of March 15th were tried by a military court and most of them sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. It was obvious to us that all the native population was hostile and so no chances were taken. Thus when the above-mentioned men were sent from the police station to the Egyptian prison at Benha they were accompanied by a strong armed force of mounted and foot troops, who kept the populace at a considerable distance. I attended to hand over the prisoners and the official documents to the Governor and was shown over the prison, which was planned, I was told, on British lines. It seemed to me to be a model institution and likely to cause many of the captives to be cleaner and healthier there than in their own squalid, insanitary homes. The native hostility to us was frequently noticed when it was necessary to get an English-speaking official to perform some task for the military. Thus the telegraph officials, who were quite used to transmitting messages in English, became woefully dense during this period. So that a similar amount of obstruction should not be encountered in connection with the train service for military purposes, an English official of the Egyptian State Railways came to live temporarily at Benha railway station. He effectually stopped "ca canny" and obstruction.

During this period a military court consisting of three officers detailed by G.H.Q. sat at Benha to try some offenders, including a sheik of a village. I prosecuted and the accused were defended by a young Arabic lawyer, who seemed to me to conduct his case (in English) very cleverly. One of the witnesses was the English

chief of the police of the Qalyubiya Mudiriya (Province). All these steps taken to restore and preserve order had the result of keeping the population quiet, although things were far from normal.

At the beginning of April, however, General Allenby issued a proclamation that Zaghul Pasha and his three companions, who had been deported to Malta, would be allowed to return. Further, all restrictions on travel were removed. News of this spread among the natives in the curious manner peculiar to the East. I had been with some other officers on a visit to a bridge guard and, coming back, observed great signs of excitement and much shouting among the Egyptians on the outskirts of a small native village. On returning to Battalion headquarters and hearing the news, we realized the reason of the excitement. Many of us feared that there would be another outbreak of rioting. Our position as guardians of the peace was certainly somewhat embarrassing, as the Egyptians, of course, "had their tails up," for they felt they had scored a moral victory. Permission was given by G.H.Q. for native demonstrations to be held the next day and Benha was thronged with people, who marched in triumph shouting and waving flags. All troops were confined to barracks and our patrols were withdrawn from the streets that day. Once again we marvelled at the spectacle of all classes and sections of the Egyptian population uniting in their demand for independence, but no disorder occurred. A few days later the natives demonstrated in a truly remarkable way. Zaghul Pasha and his companions travelled from Alexandria to Cairo by train on his return. We were assured that at every station and level-crossing between these two places the inhabitants were congregated to cheer their heroes. At Benha there was certainly a packed mass of excited humanity.

During the remainder of April and nearly all May we continued to carry on our duties of preserving the peace. Fridays were days when we were especially alert, as we were told that there was a danger that the Egyptians might demonstrate on leaving their mosques. There was always a risk that the trouble might take the form of a religious war. The Brigade had the assistance, as Intelligence Officer, of a highly-placed Anglo-Egyptian civil servant, and the Battalion, in a similar capacity, of an English business man. These, knowing Arabic, did their utmost to discover who were responsible for promoting the riot of March 15th and to prevent any similar disturbance. During May it was decided to raid the houses of about half a dozen prominent officials and private residents. Raiding parties were detailed in advance, each under an officer and varying in numerical strength according to the size of the house to be dealt with. The instructions issued were to seize all documents, arms and ammunition. Elaborate precautions were taken to ensure that the raids were carried out swiftly and that the move was a complete surprise, so that there should be no violence or damage to property. The activities of these various groups led to a large quantity of

documents and some sporting guns and ammunition being taken to Brigade headquarters, where the former were carefully examined.

About this time a visit was made to Benha by General Bulfin, who during General Allenby's absence in England during 1919 became acting Commander-in-Chief and afterwards commanded "Force in Egypt." This visit was of some interest to us, as before the outbreak of war General Bulfin was in command of the Essex Infantry Brigade. The Brigadier and his staff, Colonel Gibbons and myself, were at the station to meet the visitor, who received a report on the situation locally, but to our slight disappointment, he did not appear to realize that the Battalion stationed there was one which formed part of his 1918 Territorial Brigade.

We carried on preserving the peace in this area until the last few days in May. The daylight train service gradually improved and so demobilization was re-opened and many officers and men left us, including a number who had served with the unit from the time of its departure overseas in 1915. In the latter days of our stay at Benha conditions became so much easier that it was possible to enjoy some recreation and entertainment. This took the shape of three military race meetings at Quweisna, eight miles away, football matches, a few games of cricket, including one between a 5th team and one representing 54th Division headquarters, tennis on the asphalt court belonging to a local cotton merchant and several really excellent entertainments by the Brigade concert party directed by Lieut. Gilmour, of the 5th.

On bidding farewell to this station in the Nile Delta, this native town which at that time had only one English civilian inhabitant, we went back to Cairo without regret, having been relieved by an Indian Regiment. We went first to some schools in the industrial area, in close proximity to the important engineering works and locomotive sheds of the Egyptian State Railways. It was our duty to guard these and also be responsible for order in this part of Cairo, a district in which rioting might be likely to break out. Nothing of a serious nature occurred while we were here, although it was necessary to be as much on the alert as when in front line trenches. We formed part of the 31st Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General E. M. Morris, C.M.G. Shortly afterwards we moved to a much more pleasant part of Cairo, our new billet being the Nasiriya Schools, which had been a military hospital during a great part of the war period. Nearby was the Nasiriya Hospital, which was still the principal military hospital for officers of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The schools were very comfortable and well equipped for our purposes. They were a short distance from the Nile and in the area occupied by all the principal Egyptian Government offices. To reach them we had to proceed across central Cairo and pass the Savoy Hotel (G.H.Q.). The march, therefore, was made quite a ceremonial affair, our band was at the head and playing in a spirited manner. The Battalion was responsible for dealing with any disturbance which might break out in a large part

of native Cairo, a thickly populated area, through which ran very many narrow streets. One of the first duties of the officers and senior N.C.O.'s was to become acquainted with the geography of the district. A plan had been drawn up for stopping mass demonstrations by rushing detachments in motor lorries and light cars to various suitable spots. Schools, hospitals, Government offices, etc., near these places were to be the headquarters for these detachments and so the first few days were occupied in visiting them. Several guards also had to be provided, including one at Helwan, the resort, a few miles from Cairo, so often referred to by novelists who make Egypt the centre for their plots. Here are fine hotels and famous sulphur baths. Our detachment was stationed at one of the former, where it guarded German women, former residents in Palestine, who were interned. A large aerodrome also was guarded. This detachment certainly had an easy time, one of the privileges being that of using the sulphur baths free of charge. Although at Cairo we frequently received "alarm" signals from different quarters and had to rush parties in lorries to places where trouble was anticipated, we had nothing really serious to deal with. The most exciting daily event was that of bidding farewell to the demobilization party. Lorries were used for its conveyance to the Cairo main station. The Battalion's band always attended and played cheerful music during the wait before departure, and "Auld Lang Syne" immediately the train began to move. Hardened as most of us were by years of active service, we all felt sad at witnessing the departure of fellows with whom we had lived and fought over a long period. At one of these "farewells," while waiting for the train to leave, I had a chat with Lieut.-Colonel Sir Carne Rasch, who was proceeding home on the conclusion of his military duties in Egypt. As a regular soldier and not then connected with the Territorial Force, I doubt if he dreamed that the band playing was that of the unit he would be commanding in the space of a few years and that thereafter he would be commanding the 161st Brigade. During the Coal Strike of 1920 I was acting as Assistant Adjutant of the 5th Battalion Defence Force. One day when I was leaving T.F. headquarters at Chelmsford, with Colonel Gibbons, we met Sir Carne, who was there on some matter connected with a Cadet Battalion. In the course of conversation, Colonel Gibbons said he was trying to find someone to succeed him as C.O. 5th Battalion, and suggested that Sir Carne should think over the idea of taking the command. As an outcome of this chance meeting, eventually this change of command took place.

ADVENTURES WITH AN ARMoured TRAIN.

When the 5th Essex were sent to Benha to preserve order, one company was ordered to be ready to move at short notice and during the next few weeks had a series of experiences of extraordinary interest. This company was about 80 strong,

with Captain Carlyon Hughes in command and three subalterns, Foley, Whaling and Smythe. The duty was to provide crews for armoured trains. An armoured train had been improvised for the defence of the Suez Canal and in 1916 Captain Colvin had been in charge of it during the Senussi rising. This train was now divided into halves and did excellent duty against the Egyptian rioters. It had been improvised from closed steel goods trucks of the Egyptian State Railway. These had an inner lining of steel plates about a foot from the exterior and of a height of 4ft. 6in., the cavity being filled with shingle to make them bullet proof. Above this protection was a narrow opening all the way round, from which rifles could be fired, whilst another opening next the roof provided essential ventilation. There was a narrow opening at the end of each coach where steps were placed which allowed easy movement from one to the other. The engine (unarmoured) was in the middle of the train. Upon the front truck—open in front and for a few feet along the sides—was a pom-pom, which fired a pound shell, fed by a belt as with machine guns. Also in this car were mounted two Vickers machine guns, which could be lifted off the train, if necessary. Two armoured trucks followed, then the engine, another couple of trucks, a first class saloon carriage for living quarters, steel goods wagon for the conveyance of prisoners, another for rations, another as living quarters for the native engine drivers and platelayers, and, lastly, open trucks for carrying rails, sleepers and material that might be necessary to repair the damaged track. A couple of small four-wheeled trolleys were carried, each with a Lewis gun, with four natives to push them, who, running on the rails, could do twelve miles an hour. They proved most useful for the purpose of getting over a damaged portion of the line and patrolling ahead of the train whilst the track was being repaired. On a truck behind the engine a searchlight was carried. The vacuum brake could be applied from the front truck of the train, which proved a valuable safeguard. The crew consisted of an officer and about 35 other ranks, with about a dozen machine gunners, R.E. sergeant in charge of the searchlight and a couple of R.A.M.C. privates in case of casualties. An official of the Irrigation Department was carried as interpreter and unofficial adviser; also an official of the Egyptian State Railway, with a driver, fireman, a few platelayers and four runners for the trolleys. The position was serious. Telegraph lines were down, stations burnt, rails pulled up, bridges damaged and the whole country in an uproar. The mission of one train was to get through to Mansura and then along the branch line towards Qalin. The commander (Captain Carlyon Hughes) was to do any repairs, consult with native chiefs and police and arrest ringleaders where trouble had occurred. He was given a practically free hand, even when he came directly under control of the O.C. No. 1 Mounted Force. The advice given was to act firmly with the natives and the

train crew were proud to be able to say at the close they had so acted that not a single Egyptian had been killed by them. The first journey undertaken was a short one. The train ran into Mehallet-Roh junction and succeeded in bringing into Tanta, the headquarters, about a dozen trucks of cotton, which would probably have been burnt had it not been salvaged. A trip to Mansura followed, where riots had broken out. On steaming into Mehallat el Kebir a native was seen running away from a telegraph pole where the wires were hanging down. The party were met by a frightened policeman, who informed them that his officer had just been murdered by the mob. The arrival of the train had been too much for the crowd and the town appeared deserted. An interview with the local governor indicated who the assassin was, but the sternest measures, even to the extent of placing him in front of a firing party, could not wring information from the latter. The man's pluck was admired, but subsequently legal evidence was obtained which enabled the murderer to be brought to justice. At Mansura a young subaltern of the 10th Londons was found with a weak platoon to keep in order a population of about 70,000, who had looted the British Consul's house and burnt the Union Jack. On one occasion he had dispersed the crowd by firing over their heads and he had also arrested some of the ringleaders. These were placed under guard in a waiting room. Subsequently two of the prisoners asked to see Captain Carlyon Hughes and requested that, being the sons of rich men, they should not be kept with the others, but they were promptly informed that they must share the discomforts with the rest. They got into communication with their parents, who also intervened, the request being accompanied by a large basket of eggs. The next day they were taken to Tanta to be tried by civil authority. This was followed, after a conference with the European representatives, by the arrest of one of the most prominent leaders, which had a great effect upon the crowd and they subsequently allowed the train to depart for Tanta with twenty prisoners without molestation, overawed probably by the machine guns mounted on the platform. When travelling towards Qalin, at a later date, the train was nearly derailed owing to the removal of a fish plate and the bending of a rail, but the trucks luckily held the line. At Shin several rails had been removed and thrown into the canal. Some straight talk to the native governor resulted in the assembling of a crowd, which was soon busily engaged in recovering the material. The official, clad in a black frock coat with tarbush, supervised their exertions with a long hide whip. On March 23rd the train was attached to No. 1 Mounted Column, which was being sent to deal with troubles in Kefr esh Sheikh and the surrounding district, where the Turkish flag had been hoisted. The duty of the train was to bring up supplies and take back prisoners. At the bridge just outside the town, where the main line ran over the light railway,

the train could not go any farther, as the structure had been badly damaged. The trolleys were carried over the gap, with a Lewis gun on each, and then pushed into the station a few minutes ahead of the column. The bridge was repaired next day. The train was ordered to proceed to the north and, if possible, to work round to Shirbin, where the Tanta-Damietta line could be reached and provide a way back to Tanta. On the way the train stopped at a wayside station to thank an old Turkish pasha for rescuing two airmen whose 'plane had been shot down with an old smooth-bore gun by rioters from Kefr esh Sheikh. They had been already ducked in the canal when the Pasha arrived. He presented his wife, an elderly Frenchwoman, at the interview. At Kom et Tamil, a pretty old walled village, everything appeared tranquil, for it was under the control of a wealthy Egyptian, who ruled like a feudal baron in mediæval England. He entertained the crew of the train to a feast of fourteen courses, including lamb, turkey and geese. In return a searchlight display was given. On coming to Shirbin the train party were informed by an excited native policeman that a meeting of the Nationalist Committee, composed mainly of students, was even then being held. The house was picketed. Some of the inmates made their escape, but others who tried to drop to safety from the windows ran into the sentries. The remainder hid where they could in the house, including the harem, within which they were arrested, despite the shrill screams of the ladies, who proved by no means as picturesque as portrayed by the novelist. Next day the crestfallen committee were handed over to civil authority at Tanta. The train party were ordered to return to the 1/5th Essex, but Captain Carlyon Hughes was retained for duty with a crew from the 10th Londons, under the orders of the O.C. No. 2 Mounted Column. Mansura was the base and the first order was to get through to Damietta. When preparing to cross the branch of the Nile opposite the town, the governor came over. He had commanded an Egyptian regiment under Kitchener and had quelled the rioting with the aid of a dozen Soudanese coastguards. The latter were armed only with canes and seemed quite capable of controlling the situation. A visit was paid to Fareskur on the way back, where there was much unrest. The actions of the native police officer were held to be suspicious and carbines and ammunition in excess of requirements were seized and conveyed to the boats for despatch across the river. On the way down the party were stoned. That night the town was lit up by searchlight, which had a most salutary effect upon the crowd. They were preparing to rush the governor's house and gave up the attempt because, they said, they could not fight against a man who could see them with his big eye over two miles away. The next morning another visit was paid to the town and several arrests were made. So the work went on until the commotion quieted down and demobilization was resumed.

ABSORPTION AND THEN DISBANDMENT.

From June, 1919, onwards, military life was extremely pleasant. Comfortably quartered, with duties light, local leave plentiful, the prospect of sudden death removed and climate delightful, even if on the hot side, it is doubtful if any of those soldiering had a genuine "grouse." On August 1st the 1/5th moved into the native area of Cairo, its new station being the Citadel, which, being a peace-time Regular Army barracks, was quite comfortable. Duties were a little heavier, as more guards had to be provided, but as native demonstrations and rioting had ceased, all ranks had a fairly easy time.

The effect of demobilization was quickly felt. In June, the 1/7th were absorbed into the 1/5th Essex and known as the 5th. Lieut.-Colonel T. Gibbons was in command. Similarly the 1/6th were combined with the 1/4th Essex, under the latter name, with Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Ewer in command. In the September following the 5th were amalgamated with the 4th and the 4th Essex were, in turn, disbanded by Christmas, 1919. Those ranks still serving were transferred to other units.





R.S.M. WILDING, 1/5 Essex.



R.S.M. LAMBERT, 1/6 ESSEX.

SECOND AND THIRD LINE UNITS.

During the war second and third line units were formed, but, unfortunately, many of the records have been lost and it has been difficult to trace fully their history.

The second line battalions were constituted at the respective headquarters in September-October-November, 1914, being numbered the 2/4th, 2/5th, 2/6th and 2/7th Battalions The Essex Regiment respectively. Recruits came in rapidly and training was undertaken in the vicinity of the depots. When the latter was sufficiently advanced orders were issued for the formation of an East Anglian Reserve Division and by December all the second line battalions were quartered in and about Peterborough and at Stamford, Lines. The 206th (Essex) Brigade was constituted in exactly the same order as that of the first line and armed with Japanese rifles. The Division was subsequently numbered the 69th. In January, 1915, the 2/4th Essex were sent to Yarmouth and their place taken by the 4/1st Hertfordshire. By the early summer of 1915 the Division was moved to Thetford and trained under canvas. The units were quartered for the following winter in the surrounding towns, though the administration was still centred at Thetford. In June, 1916, the Division was transferred from the Eastern to the Northern Command, the summer being spent at Harrogate. For the winter, 1916-17, the units were sent to billets in neighbouring towns. The 206th Brigade was grouped in and around Doncaster, though divisional headquarters remained at Harrogate. Headquarters were removed for the summer of 1917 to Retford, Notts., the Division being under canvas at Welbeck Park, near Worksop. In the winter, 1917-18, there was a considerable dispersion. The 206th Brigade was sent to towns in Durham—Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Darlington. This ended the association of Essex Territorials with the 69th Division, for the personnel was absorbed in the 4th Reserve Battalion, and the places of the battalions taken by graded units of North Country Regiments. The rest of the story of the Division is soon told. November was again spent at Welbeck Park and when the Armistice came the Division was demobilized from Retford, which had remained the headquarters. The 69th Division was created with the intention of being sent on foreign service, but the demand for personnel caused large drafts to be made upon its strength to supply the first line and also other battalions of the individual regiments. This effectively prevented its use as an overseas formation, although it retained its distinctive identity until the end.

The following are the leading events in the history of the Essex units :—

The 2/4th Battalion was formed at Brentwood in November, 1914, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel W. C. Shepherd, and was a month later sent to Stamford. Early in January, 1915, it was transferred to Great Yarmouth for coast defence work, though the remainder of the Essex Brigade remained at Peterborough. The B1 and C1 men were transferred to the 65th Provisional Battalion, formed at Yarmouth in June, 1915, and the "A" category men were sent to Thetford as the 2/4th Essex, under Captain B. A. Clapham, later killed in action at the First Battle of Gaza. This unit had only a short existence, for it was amalgamated with the 3/4th at Halton Camp in December, 1915. The Battalion continued coast defence work at Yarmouth and was there when the town was bombarded, the cap of a shell falling in the garden of the orderly room. In January, 1917, it was reconstituted the 15th Battalion The Essex Regiment, one of the few units of B1 category selected for overseas service. In May, 1918, the 15th Essex were ordered to France under the command of Lieut.-Colonel G. J. H. Wright. The men unfit for service abroad were then formed into the 18th Battalion The Essex Regiment and continued home defence work until demobilization in May, 1919.

The 2/5th Battalion was raised at Chelmsford by Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Taylor and within a few weeks was over 700 strong. After a period at Peterborough it was in 1915 successively at Thetford (Norfolk), Billericay (Essex), then back to Thetford and later in the year at Cambridge. The 2/5th were at Thetford for the early summer of 1916, when part was employed on coast defence at Kessingland, near Lowestoft. It was in this year that the Battalion suffered the heavy loss of Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Taylor, whose enthusiasm and energy had contributed not a little to the successful recruitment of the unit. His successor in command was Lieut.-Colonel G. J. Hornsby Wright. In July, 1916, the unit went with the Division to Killinghall Camp, near Harrogate, and was billeted for the winter in the northern holiday resort. The Battalion marched from Harrogate to Welbeck Abbey for the summer of 1917, and then went into winter quarters at Middlesbrough. About 120 boys who were sent back from France as being under age were incorporated in the 2/5th in 1917. In March, 1918, the remaining personnel was absorbed into the 4th Reserve Battalion.

The 2/6th Battalion was formed at the Cedars, West Ham, in October and November, 1914, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel E. J. K. Savage. In December, 1914, it went to Thetford and was the first Battalion to appear in that town in uniform, various items of equipment being served out later. Over 50 per cent. of the rank and file signed on for Imperial Service and were drafted to the 1/6th as required and as they had received training. In October, 1915, eleven subalterns were under immediate orders to proceed overseas and they left at two days' notice, their destination being Suvla Bay. A few months later

all who had joined for home service only were transferred to provisional battalions for duty at coast stations, other recruits being posted for training. Lieut.-Colonel E. J. K. Savage retired in 1916 and was granted permission to retain his rank and wear the prescribed uniform. Lieut.-Colonel Hector Fraser took command and was followed later by Lieut.-Colonel P. D. Castle. The 2/6th were at Stockton-on-Tees in March, 1918, when the personnel was amalgamated with the 4th Reserve Battalion.

The 2/7th Battalion was raised at Walthamstow by Lieut.-Colonel J. G. Crosby and with other units of the 206th Brigade was soon afterwards quartered at Stamford. At this early period of the war enrolment in a Territorial unit was for home service only, but the personnel of such units could, if they wished, volunteer for Imperial Service. Many men who desired to serve their country, but who, for a variety of reasons, felt unable to join up for service overseas, enrolled themselves in Territorial battalions on account of this particular condition of service. When, therefore, the decision was taken to constitute the 206th Brigade as a foreign service brigade and to separate from it the home service personnel, some units became very much below strength. The 2/7th Battalion was particularly badly off in this respect and although it was at practically full strength as regards junior officers, the other ranks were barely sufficient to form one full company. It was in this condition that the Battalion proceeded to Thetford in the summer of 1915, under the temporary command of Captain H. F. Gillett. Early in 1916 Lieut.-Colonel Savage Armstrong, D.S.O., was appointed to the command, and at about the same date the Battalion was made up to full strength by the posting thereto of recruits under the Derby Scheme. Shortly afterwards the Battalion proceeded to Harrogate with the expectation that, now it was a complete unit, it would see active service as such. But these hopes were not to be realized, as on the completion of training the Battalion was called upon to furnish drafts for overseas, the vacancies being filled with low category personnel. While at Harrogate Lieut.-Colonel C. W. W. Burrell succeeded to the command of the 2/7th, Lieut.-Colonel Savage Armstrong having proceeded to France, where shortly afterwards he fell in action. With other units of the Brigade, the 2/7th marched from Harrogate to Welbeck in April, 1917, where it remained as a draft-finding unit throughout the summer, and it was subsequently moved to Ramsgate, where the whole Battalion was accommodated in the Granville Hotel and where air raid alarms were an almost daily occurrence. During the winter the strength of the Battalion was gradually reduced by drafts for France, until in February, 1918, it was disbanded. The remaining personnel was transferred to the 4th Reserve Battalion at Crowborough.

The third line units were authorized in May, 1915. They were numbered the 3/4th, 3/5th, 3/6th and 3/7th and were brigaded together. The object of their formation was to supply drafts

for the first line battalions, then about to proceed overseas. The commanding officers were: 3/4th, Lieut.-Colonel H. H. Slade; 3/5th, Lieut.-Colonel W. P. N. Ridley; 3/6th, Lieut.-Colonel W. F. Grant; 3/7th, Lieut.-Colonel Anderson Neville. They were at Windsor Park, near Queen Anne's Gate, in August, 1915, then at Halton Camp, Wendover, from October until the disbandment of the units in September, 1916, when the whole of the personnel was absorbed in the 4th Reserve Battalion. Whilst at Windsor the units were honoured by a surprise visit by the King and Queen. At one period at Halton Camp the Battalions were well over strength. The 3/5th, for instance, had forty officers and 1,400 N.C.O.'s and men, but heavy drafts to several of the overseas battalions quickly reduced the personnel. Both the former adjutants of this Battalion, Lieut. T. H. O. Capron and 2nd Lieut. C. V. Edmunds, fell in action at the First Battle of Gaza.

Lieut. W. F. Cook, 6th Essex, gives the following account of his experiences after joining the camp at Wendover in January, 1916: After a few days, during which time I settled down to the atrociously muddy condition of the camp, to the detriment of my new kit, I was sent off with others to the Young Officers' Company at Halton. This training company was comprised of about 250 newly-gazetted officers (irrespective of their previous military service) from the 54th Division third line units, including the 3/1st Cambs., 3/1st Herts. and 3/5th Beds. Intensive training began next morning at 6 a.m. and consisted of drill, trench digging, bayonet fighting, etc., exactly as was being performed by raw recruits in other parts of this extensive camp. The work was strenuous, especially as the weather was very bitter at the time, but the discipline was excellent, with the result that the spirit of the new officers was up to standard, even though the performance of their work was at times poor. After two months of this progressive work, we began to wonder if we should ever see our units again, particularly those who had served (in a lesser capacity) since we mobilized in August, 1914. By the end of March, however, we had our answer, for the whole contingent from the Cambs. rejoined their unit before the examination and at very short notice they were sent to France in early May to make up the shortage of young officers, who, at that time, were still going 'over the top' dressed so conspicuously different from the troops that they were picked off by the enemy machine gunners. The remainder were very shortly afterwards sent back to their units and our work then consisted of training recruits and forming drafts to send to the first line battalions. Lieut.-Colonel W. F. Grant commanded the 3/6th and Captain H. Oliver, T.D., was Adjutant. By this time (May, 1916) the mess was a large one (approximately 50 officers) on account of the return for duty of many 1/6th Battalion officers who were due to be sent out again on draft. It fell to the lot of Lieut. Daniel and Lieuts. R. E. Cook and W. F.

Cook to take out the largest draft of 250 men on the "Huntsgreen" on June 10th, 1916. We left Halton Camp in the early hours just before dawn and marched to the station with our excellent band playing the regimental march and songs of cheer. Many of the men had only recently been under our command, having been sent to us from the 3/5th Bedfordshire to make our numbers up, but they were fine lads and did excellent work in the First Battle of Gaza and subsequently.

The 4th Reserve Battalion was formed at Halton Camp, Wendover, in September, 1916, from the third line Territorial units, by Lieut.-Colonel A. R. Bryant, O.B.E., to supply drafts to all battalions of the Essex Regiment—Regular, Territorial and Service—and for that purpose there was very close co-operation with the 3rd Battalion at Felixstowe. Officers and N.C.O.'s of the training staffs were continually exchanged. The Battalion remained at Halton until April, 1917, was at Crowborough till August, 1918, and at St. Leonard's until it was disbanded in February, 1919.

The 66th and 67th Provisional Battalions were also formed by transfers from the Territorial units. These were reconstituted respectively the 16th Battalion, T.F., and 17th Battalion, T.F., in January, 1917.

In addition to troops for active service and home defence, the Local Guards, formed late in 1914, had their headquarters at The Cedars, and were, in February, 1915, borne upon the pay rolls as Supernumerary Companies of the 6th Essex. They were stationed as under in the late Spring of 1915 :—

- No. 1 Co.—Abbey Mills, Stratford, E.
- No. 3 Co.—Bishops Stortford (from Chelmsford).
- No. 4 Co.—Chelmsford.
- No. 6 Co.—Lexden (from Witham).
- No. 8 Co.—Mistley.
- No. 9 Co.—Longfield Camp (from Dartford).
- No. 10 Co.—Wellingborough (from Rainham, Essex).
- No. 11 Co.—Lessness Park, Abbey Wood, Woolwich (from Dartford).
- No. 12 Co.—West Ham.
- No. 13 Co.—Waltham Abbey.
- No. 14 Co.—Marconi Works, Chelmsford, with a detachment as ferry guard at Fambridge Ferry.

When the Royal Defence Force was constituted in May, 1916, No. 1 Company became the 107th Company; Nos. 3, 4 and 6, 44th; No. 8, 57th; No. 9, 64th; No. 11, 122nd; No. 12, 107th; No. 13 (with 9th Middlesex), 149th.

AFTER THE WAR.

The Essex Infantry Brigade was reconstituted on February 16th, 1920, the date upon which the Territorial Army was also reconstituted. The first brigade commander was Colonel E. C. da Costa, C.M.G., D.S.O., who was appointed on April 13th, 1920. He was succeeded in April, 1924, by Colonel T. N. S. M. Howard, C.B., D.S.O., and the latter in April, 1928, by Colonel Sir F. C. Rasch, Bart. The annual camps, usually held at the latter end of July for a fortnight, were at the following places : 1920, Clacton ; 1921, Bexhill ; 1922, Clacton ; 1923, St. Osyth ; 1924, Swingate Camp, Dover ; 1925, Canterbury ; 1926, Melton, Suffolk ; 1927, Brentwood ; 1928, Scaford ; 1929, Mytchett, Aldershot ; 1930, Myrtle Grove, Worthing.

The battalions of the Brigade, still numbered the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions The Essex Regiment, were reconstituted on February 7th, 1920. The following is a list of commanding officers, with headquarters, since that date :—

4th BATTALION (Gordon Road, Ilford).

Colonel C. H. R. Taylor, O.B.E., T.D.	March, 1920.
Colonel B. C. Wells, D.S.O., T.D.	June, 1920.
Lieut.-Colonel J. L. French	June, 1928.

5th BATTALION (Market Road, Chelmsford).

Colonel T. Gibbons, D.S.O., T.D.	March, 1920.
Colonel Sir F. C. Rasch, Bart.	January, 1922.
Lieut.-Colonel C. Portway, M.C.	January, 1928.

6th BATTALION (The Cedars, West Ham).

Lieut.-Colonel B. J. Ward, T.D.	March, 1920.
Lieut.-Colonel P. D. Castle, T.D.	February, 1924.
Lieut.-Colonel E. A. Loftus, O.B.E., T.D.	September, 1925.
Lieut.-Colonel C. A. Baily, O.B.E.	September, 1929.

7th BATTALION (Church Hill, Walthamstow).

Colonel H. F. Kemball, T.D.	February, 1920.
Bt.-Colonel G. Shenstone, T.D.	February, 1924.
Lieut.-Colonel F. R. Waller, T.D.	February, 1930.

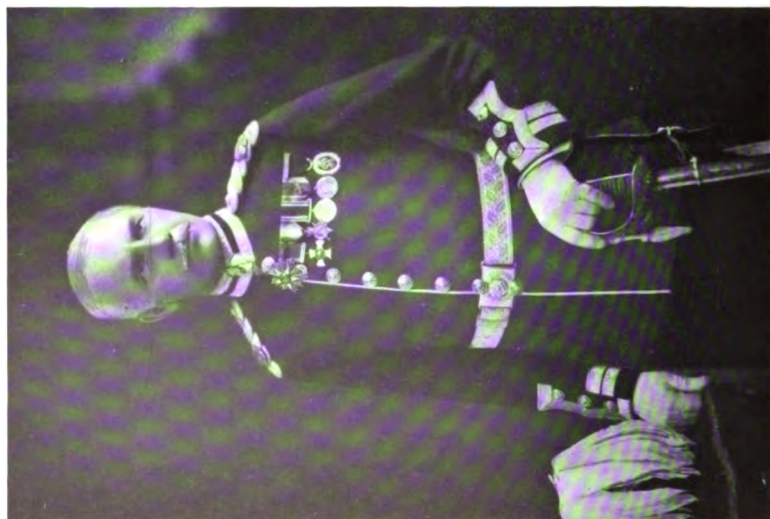
The constitution of the battalions remained the same as during the war period, upon a home service establishment, until 1929, when changes were made with a view to the permanent organization of each unit into three rifle companies and one machine gun company as from April 1st, 1930. Consequent thereupon, the machine gun platoon of the headquarters wing was abolished. This reorganization involved the reduction of the establishment from 656 to 604 all ranks per battalion. Each machine gun company was armed with eight machine guns, to be expanded in war time to 16 guns. When the announcement



LIEUT.-COL. J. L. FRENCH, 4th Battalion,
commanding.



COL. BARRINGTON WELLS, D.S.O., T.D., 4th Battalion,
commanding 1920-1928.



COL. T. GIBBONS, D.S.O., T.D., 5th Battalion,
commanding 1920-1922



COL. SIR F. C. RASCH, Bart., 5th Battalion, commanding
1922-1928 (afterswords commander 161st Brigade).



*LIEUT. COL. PORTWAY, M.C., 5th Battalion,
commanding.*



*LIEUT. COL. CASTLE, T.D., 6th Battalion,
commanding 1924-1925.*



LIEUT.-COL. F. A. LOFTUS, O.B.E., T.D., 6th Battalion,
commanding 1923-1929.



LIEUT.-COL. CLIFFORD A. BAILLY, O.B.E., 6th Battalion,
commanding.



COL. G. SHENSTONE, T.D., 7th Battalion,
commanding 1924-1930.



LIEUT. COL. F. R. WALLER, T.D., 7th Battalion,
commanding.

was made the War Office further stated: "The present policy for the Territorial Army is to make a gradual transition towards mechanization so that on mobilization Territorial units and Regular units will take the field with the same organization and equipment." This policy was in consonance with the military view of the time, which demanded that regard should be paid to mechanical aids, particularly transport, which could be adapted to the purposes of war. As an illustration of this new viewpoint, Colonel T. N. S. M. Howard, C.B., D.S.O., who commanded the Essex Infantry Brigade from 1924 to 1928, had previously expressed his emphatic opinion in an article in *The Fighting Forces* (January, 1928): "The necessity for a revolutionary change has been emphasized by the result of experiments with the new mechanized formation at Tidworth, the foundation of which is a tank battalion. It is in the realization that a tank battalion is the foundation of this formation that we must look for the solution of our problem. Up-to-date infantry has been the foundation of all fighting formations and armies. Other arms (cavalry, artillery, etc.) have existed to make it possible for infantry to close with and overrun the enemy and so win the war. Now we see that tanks (of various sizes, etc.) have taken over this final role, except in so far as mountain warfare or warfare in dense forests and large swamps is concerned; and other arms now exist to enable them to close with and give the *coup de grace* to an enemy. No longer is infantry (as at present organized and equipped) the army which 'in the end wins battles,' or with whom 'the eventual decision rests,' or which 'confirms victory,' except in special theatres of war. Their former role on the stage of the battle-field is now played by machine gunners with highly mobile 'armoured fighting machines' (A.F.V.'s, as they have been designated for brevity). As an infantry soldier, it gives me no pleasure to admit this, but wars are not won by over-sentimental attachment to outworn methods, and we need have no fear that the spirit and traditions of our army will die with our discarded methods of locomotion. Nor, when asked (as we now are) to suggest minor reorganizations, such as the substitution of a machine gun company for one of the lettered companies, should we fear to take the plunge and admit that it is not reorganization, but transformation that is required for normal theatres of war."

8th (Cyclist) BATTALION THE ESSEX REGIMENT.

In the period immediately preceding the formation of the Territorial Force in 1908 each Volunteer Battalion, besides having eight companies of infantry, was allowed a company of cyclists, mainly used for scouting and intelligence services. When in annual camp the Brigadier found them exceedingly helpful, for he used them as a mobile force against the rest of the Brigade and thus made possible much more extended and instructive operations. Accordingly the Essex Brigade had four cyclist companies which required to be allocated under the Territorial scheme. As it happened, Suffolk also had four Volunteer Battalions, with four cyclist companies, and by the association of the eight companies there was obtained the personnel of a Cyclist Battalion, which was placed upon the establishment as the Essex and Suffolk Cyclist Battalion, the Territorial Association of each county administering its own half battalion and Essex providing the headquarters staff. Each company bore the badge of the county in which it was raised. Of the Essex Companies the nucleus of "A" was taken from the former 1st and 4th V.B. Essex, "B" from the 3rd V.B. Essex and "C" from the 2nd V.B. Essex. The fourth Company (Saffron Walden) was an entirely new one. The use and employment of military cyclists had been constantly discussed prior to 1908, not only in this country, but particularly in France, where a good deal had been written upon the subject by staff officers and enthusiastic wheelmen. Many cavalrymen were impressed with the possibilities of their use in manœuvre on account of their mobility and the great range of action which was afforded in any country well served with roads. Despite this growing interest, the Regular Army had adopted no larger units than divisional companies for communication services and it was the Territorial Force which was authorized to try the experiment of cyclist units of battalion strength. Thus it came about that among other counties Essex and Suffolk were allotted a Cyclist Battalion, with a machine gun section armed with two Maxim guns. The Battalion headquarters were at Colchester. The commanding officer was Lieut.-Colonel T. J. Boulter, of Leytonstone, who had been commissioned in the 4th Volunteer Battalion The Essex Regiment and was at that time the senior cyclist company officer serving. The company headquarters were :

A.—Leyton.

B.—West Ham.

C.—Colchester.

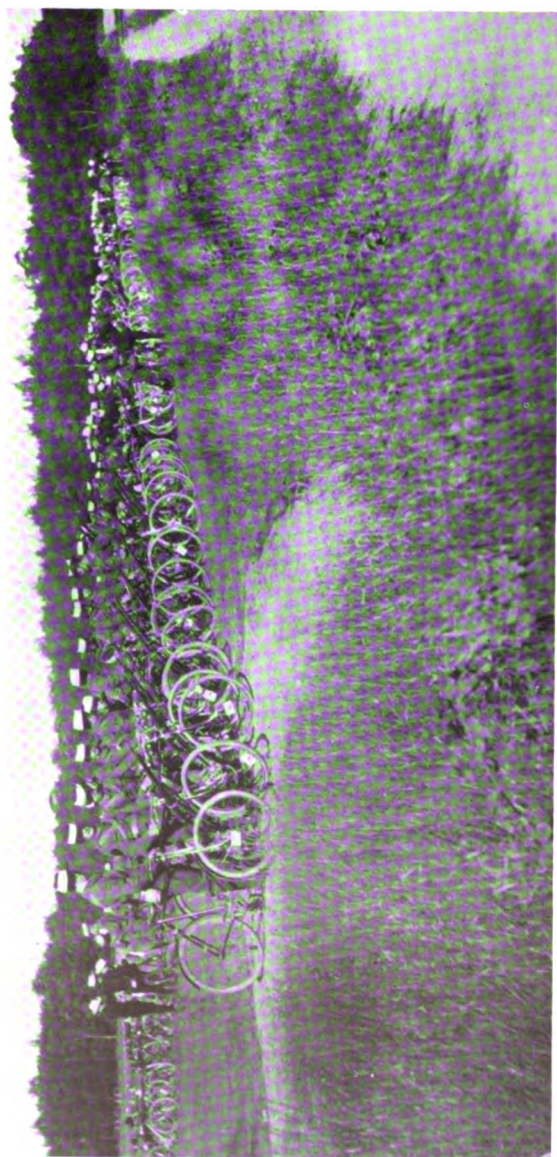
D.—Saffron Walden.

E.—Ipswich.

F.—Ipswich.

G.—Stowmarket.

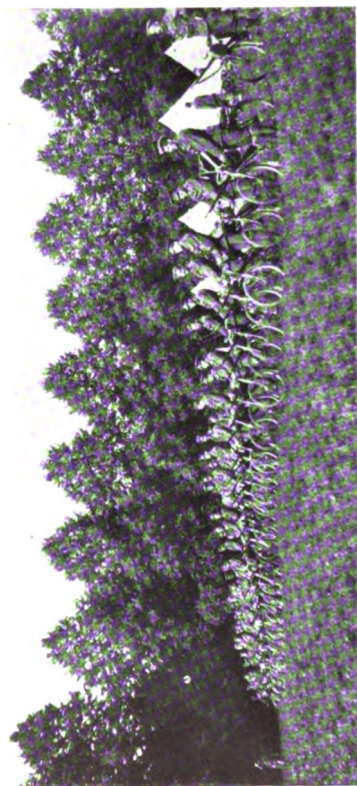
H.—Bury St. Edmunds.



Aldershot, August 1901.



Battalion Parade, 1915, Englehurst, Battalion Headquarters, Great Clacton, on left,



A & B Companies parading to ride to London, Audley End, August 8th, 1907.

Full dress was dark blue helmet, scarlet tunic and dark trousers of the Essex Regiment, whilst the working dress was the infantry khaki, except that knickerbockers, hosetops and spats were used in place of trousers and puttees. The cycle was the property of the soldier and upon each man was laid the duty of maintaining it in efficient condition. Scarlet was discarded in 1913 and a full dress suit of blue was provided, comprising a blue cap and cloth patrol jacket, blue breeches (laced) and blue puttees, with scarlet sash for officers and sergeants. This change enabled full dress to be used when riding and greatly facilitated the attendance of men at church parades in peace time. Equipment was at first taken over from the Volunteer Battalions, but this was later called in and brown leather bandolier equipment of an up-to-date pattern issued. Rifles were of the latest type—charger loading converted long Lee Enfield, later called the Territorial rifle, and reckoned by shooting experts to be the best shooting 303 military rifle ever issued.

Recruiting was actively undertaken. Cyclists units were probably advantageously placed when compared with infantry in attracting recruits, because of the popularity which cycling enjoyed among civilians and also the more interesting and varied training which was possible at the annual camps. The result was there was always a good percentage present of "other ranks," but much difficulty was, at times, experienced in filling the commissioned ranks. The reasons for this were not obvious, and were probably also those which made for a scarcity of applications for the infantry battalions. Some three or four years before the war the Adjutant (Captain E. E. Pearson) obtained the names of thirty eligible young men, all resident in Essex, and wrote tactful letters to them. The majority did not vouchsafe any reply and four or five answered with refusals. This notwithstanding, the Essex and Suffolk gradually increased in strength. The first camp in 1908 was at Hollingbury Park, Brighton. Though the organization and use of large bodies of armed cyclists was at that time experimental, yet as the main desire behind the creation of the Territorial Force was responsibility for home defence, it was not unnatural that the General Staff first turned its mind to their utilization for coast watching and defence, with Yeomanry and artillery, as the next most mobile arms, held ready to reinforce them. Thus, in the initial years, the Essex and Suffolk Cyclist Battalion was tied down to coast defence work so that there was little opportunity for training as a mobile unit in open warfare. The change in the conception of its use was largely brought about by the decision to allot certain of the cyclist battalions to cavalry brigades for the Army manœuvres. The request for their services was first made in July, 1910, when Brigadier-General H. N. C. Heath, C.B., commanding the 11th Infantry Brigade at Colchester, was instructed to embark on August 1st the 2nd West Yorkshires, 1st Bedfords, 2nd Northampton and 2nd

Scottish Rifles, with the 99th Battery, R.F.A., a section 9th Field Company, R.E., and details, R.A.M.C., with four companies of the Essex and Suffolk Cyclist Battalion (under Lieut.-Colonel T. J. Boulter) at Parkeston Quay in the "Neapolitan Prince" and "Alnwick Castle" (afterwards torpedoed and sunk as hospital ship during the war), with the intention of making a surprise landing at dawn on the shores of Sheppey, where a considerable number of Territorials were in training. Disembarkation by means of flat-bottomed boats was commenced, but, owing to the rough sea, the naval officers would not proceed with the transference of the men to the shore. The transports were ordered to steam to Dover, which it was originally intended to attack. In order that the troops should land, Dover was temporarily placed outside the manœuvre area. The Brigade bivouacked at Shorncliffe and for the next three days participated in an attack upon the defences of Dover. At the conclusion, the cyclists obtained permission to return by road to their camp at Mistley. Leaving Ewell, near Dover, at 4 p.m., on one day, they reached camp at 5 p.m. on the day following, having ridden one hundred miles in the twenty-four hours. They halted for the night at Rainham, near Gravesend, and crossed the River Thames early next morning.

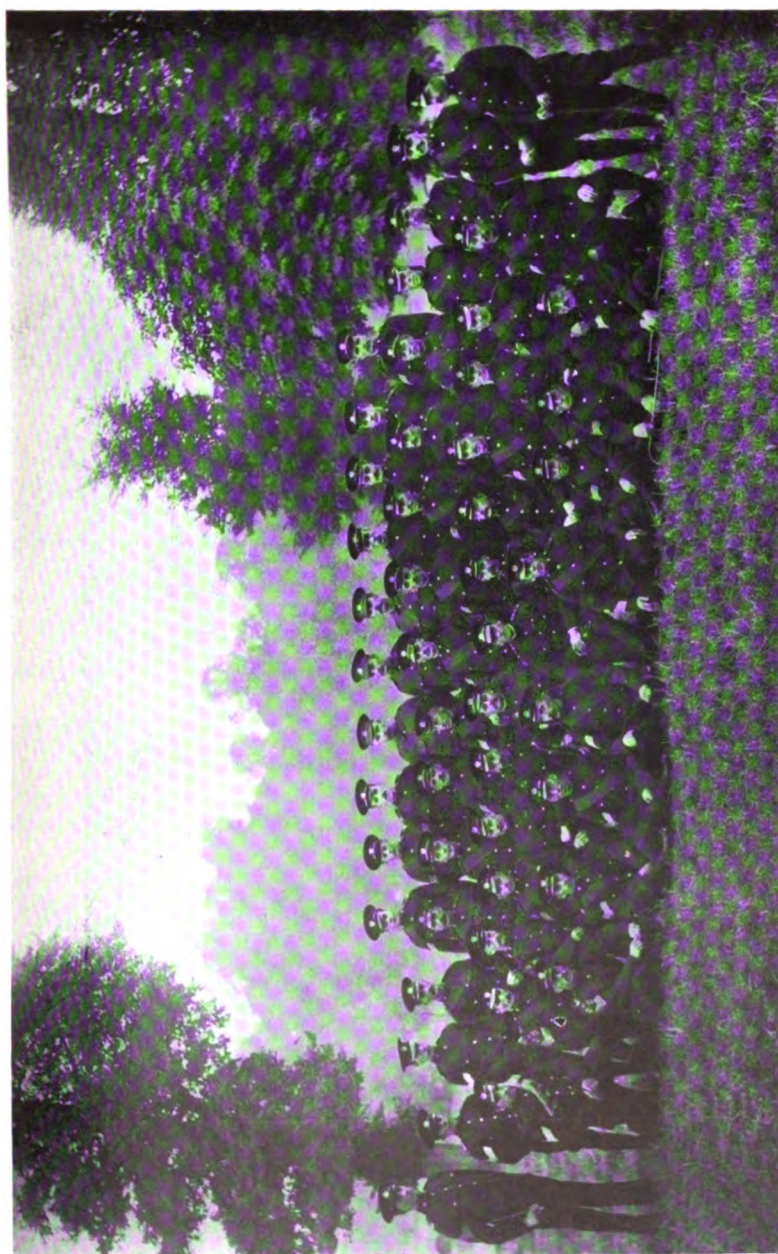
ANOTHER CHANGE OF NAME.

The annual training was held at Landguard in 1911. In August of that year the Suffolk companies were separated from those of Essex and the Battalion was wholly recruited from the latter county, under the name of the 8th (Cyclist) Battalion The Essex Regiment, with headquarters at Colchester. The Suffolk Cyclists were numbered the 6th Suffolks. The role of the Essex Battalion was twofold, for the men were trained as super-mobile troops for the purpose of open warfare and also for coast watching and defence. From their year of re-formation until 1914 the annual trainings were devoted alternately to these purposes. The eight companies each had an establishment of 58 and were stationed as follows :—

- "A" Company.—Leyton.
- "B" Company.—West Ham.
- "C" Company.—Colchester.
- "D" Company.—Saffron Walden.
- "E" Company.—East Ham.
- "F" Company.—Ilford.
- "G" Company.—Brentwood.
- "H" Company.—Coggeshall.

The new companies at East Ham and Ilford were commenced with a nucleus from "B" and "A" Companies, whilst the foundation of the Brentwood Company was laid by three N.C.O.'s of other companies who lived in districts close to the town.

In 1912 Lieut.-Colonel Boulter was transferred to the Territorial Force Reserve upon expiry of the term of his command and he



Warrant Officers and N.C.O.'s, 1913.



LIEUT.-COL. A. BOULTER, 8th Essex.

was succeeded on July 18th by Captain J. C. Tabor, of Giffords Hall, Stoke-by-Nayland. In bidding farewell, Colonel Boulter expressed to all ranks his high appreciation of their efficiency and discipline and of the excellent spirit shown, which had always rendered it a pleasure for him to be with the Battalion. He asked for his successor the same loyalty which had made his term of command so personally agreeable. The annual training was held at Clacton and in the autumn of the same year a double company of the Battalion (Major W. F. Ackland) served with the Cyclist Brigade which was organized for the Army manœuvres in North-West Essex and Cambridgeshire. Then in the autumn of 1913 came an even more important part in the annual manœuvres in the Southern Midlands, when the 6th Norfolks and 8th Essex Cyclists served with the White Force, commanded by General C. C. Monro. They were the only units utilized on the first day, when they formed a protective screen to deal with the hostile mobile troops. During the subsequent retreat of two or three days they were frequently engaged in rearguard actions. That first day, September 22nd, was remembered by many for another reason. The Army airship "Delta" was engaged in reconnaissance and discovered columns of hostile troops on the Hemel Hempstead—Dunstable and Amersham—Stoke Mandeville roads. When in the neighbourhood of Great Missenden she was attacked in a stiff breeze by a B.E. biplane and Bleriot monoplane. They fired at the airship within point blank range, but "from their steadier platform," we are told, "the 'Delta's' crew were able to drive off the aeroplanes and force them to return to earth." What a different tale was told subsequently in the Great War!

At the end of June of the fateful year of war, 1914, the Battalion had a strength of 13 officers and 473 other ranks, then wanting seven officers and ten other ranks to complete. The strength of the various companies was:—

- "A" (Leyton)—69 (Captain H. Innocent).
- "B" (West Ham)—64 (Captain W. B. Anderson).
- "C" (Colchester)—52 (Lieut. G. C. Benham).
- "D" (Saffron Walden)—57 (Lieut. E. W. Dann).
- "E" (East Ham)—61 (Captain C. A. Baily).
- "F" (Ilford)—56 (Captain W. H. Croome).
- "G" (Brentwood)—44 (Lieut. R. D. Colnett).
- "H" (Coggeshall)—73 (vacant, but filled on mobilization by 2nd Lieut. R. B. T. Hill).

Other officers serving in August, 1914 in addition to the commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel J. C. Tabor, were: Second-in-command, Major W. F. Ackland; Adjutant, Captain R. M. B. Needham (afterwards Lieut.-Colonel Needham, D.S.O., of the Suffolk Regiment); Machine Gun Section, 2nd Lieut. A. L. Feild, M.C.; Lieutenants H. L. Gibson, C. H. Attfield; Quartermaster, Captain W. A. Nicholson; Transport Officer, Lieut. Landon. The colour sergeants were: "A" Company, Sergeant J. Blockley; "B," Sergeant F. H. Wise; "C," Sergeant

Osborne ; "D," Sergeant James ; "E," Sergeant C. B. Claridge ; "F," Sergeant A. W. Butcher ; "G," Sergeant H. J. Young, and "H," Sergeant Goodwin. The organization of a Cyclist Company was on a smaller basis than that of an infantry company under the eight company system which obtained until 1915. The total establishment for a single company was 60, raised in December, 1914, to 72. The company was divided into two half companies, one of which was under an officer and the other under a colour sergeant. The four sections were each under a sergeant. This arrangement, particularly in the case of the colour sergeants, raised the status and widened the outlook of the N.C.O.'s, which was of special value during the early months of the war. When the double company system was adopted in 1915 the company establishment was 144 all ranks, the two colour sergeants becoming C.S.M. and C.Q.M.S. respectively. At the same time, the highest non-commissioned rank ceased to have the executive command which had been previously allocated to it.

MOBILIZATION FOR WAR.

The annual training commenced at Maldon on July 12th and was, therefore, completed by the time the great emergency came. The very considerable national service which was rendered by the Battalion at that critical juncture merits detailed record. Coast watching and defence were practised both by companies during the year and by the Battalion during the camp at Maldon, whilst, in addition, staff rides for officers and N.C.O.'s were frequently carried out. Each individual was made cognizant of the general duties of coast watching and also the particular requirements of the section of coast allotted to his company. The Battalion was responsible for a lengthy and intricate coast line, which stretched from Hamford Water (between Harwich and Walton) to Shoebury. Anybody who knows Essex, with its many inlets and river mouths, as well as saltings and mudflats and the absence of lateral roads, will realize the heavy undertaking to which this body of 500 men was committed. All ranks were specially trained in observing, reporting, map-reading and methods of communication. A complete scheme of war stations existed during the whole period of the Battalion's existence, to which alterations were frequently made as experience was gained in practical working during training. It so happened that 1914 was the alternate year for coast defence work, so that the Battalion was intimately acquainted with the latest war stations scheme of the General Staff. Consequently, on the day of mobilization all ranks knew their positions and duties. Active service came much more quickly than for most British units and for this reason. A Special Service Section of three officers and 42 other ranks had been formed, always maintained at full strength, charged with the special duty, upon emergency, of guarding a portion of the coast line in the vicinity of Harwich and with the obligation to take up

their position at any time when called upon. The personnel had to proceed to the war station on their own cycles, other material being carried by motor transport impressed for that purpose. To this Section was allotted any work required preliminary to mobilization and the official telegram notifying the existence of a "Precautionary Period" was the signal for officers and men to proceed to their war station. This telegram reached Colchester in the early hours of Monday, July 30th, and by 5 p.m. on that day every man was at his allotted place on or near the Essex coast, fully armed and equipped, at a time, too, when the general public were still doubtful whether the near storm would burst. So unperturbed were some officials of the Post Office that an urgent telegram calling up an officer of the Section in one of the London suburbs was not deemed worthy of special effort at delivery, but was entrusted to the postman on his usual letter round and reached the officer's house after his departure for work in London. The "Precautionary Period" had warned everybody connected with the Battalion of the seriousness of the situation, so that mobilization was in no sense a surprise. The possibility of a sudden call had been always kept on view and the duties of every man in such an event had been well studied. By a system of frequent week-end trainings for all ranks and staff tours for officers and N.C.O.'s, each sub-division of the unit and every member was kept acquainted with the ground which they would be called upon to safeguard. Each company was self-dependent and had noted down vehicles in its neighbourhood suitable for motor transport; so that when orders were received on the evening of August 4th to mobilize the Territorial Force, each Company proceeded with its own arrangements, impressed the selected vehicles, and proceeded by road to its appointed station on the coast of Essex, reporting by wire its departure from peace headquarters and arrival at its war station. The whole of the companies were in position by the early afternoon of August 5th and the Essex littoral was from that time onwards patrolled by cyclists. All this work was accomplished without the aid of the railways or any outside personnel, although the majority of the men lived upwards of fifty miles from their war stations. Communication was maintained with Colchester and additional stores required were drawn from Ordnance in the same town and distributed so efficiently that they were available by 5 p.m. on August 5th. Battalion headquarters were at Wivenhoe.

OFFER OF SERVICE OVERSEAS.

The Battalion had high hope that the War Office would not forget that it had also been trained to other duties than coast defence and that its value as a highly mobile unit would be recognized, particularly when the Expeditionary Force was placed under orders for embarkation to France. Two days after mobilization (August 7th) the unit was invited to volunteer for

foreign service and the commanding officer (Lieut.-Colonel J. C. Tabor) visited each company on different sections of the coast and explained what was required. Over 60 per cent. of all ranks immediately volunteered and the unit was accepted by the War Office. Apparently the necessities of coast defence weighed down the balance in favour of their retention in England. "So it came about," wrote Colonel Tabor, "that the Expeditionary Force proceeded to France in 1914 with no super-mobile mounted rifle force and it is not without interest to let one's ideas run on the use which could have been made of several thousand riflemen on that continuously extending flank of the Allied army—riflemen who could easily as they were required have outstripped all other arms in mobility, saved the cavalry and infantry much exhausting marching, and bumped into the vanguard of enemy columns at unexpected and widely divergent localities. Those first months of the war were ideal for their use before roads had been blocked or blasted and before warfare had settled down into the immobile trench system. However, it is presumably idle to speculate upon what might have been done either in those early months or later in the war or in the future, for the General Staff have done away completely with cyclists as fighting units and have relegated them entirely to communication work. It is as well to recall, however, that during the Agadir crisis in August, 1911, Mr. Winston Churchill, then in the Cabinet, prepared a memorandum for the Committee of National Defence providing for a British Expeditionary Force, which should include 10,000 Territorial cyclists.¹ Whether between that date and 1914 cyclists were deleted from the composition of the Expeditionary Force for technical military reasons or because the home defence authorities refused to give up the only existing Cyclist Battalions remains a secret of the War Office archives. However that may be, August, 1914, found the Cyclist Battalions allotted to definite portions of the coast line of this country and they occupied their positions, most anxiously watched by the divisional commanders, on the day of mobilization, whilst other units took days to assemble at their various inland stations."

GUARDING THE ESSEX COAST.

In any scheme of home defence of Great Britain it would appear that the Navy would not guarantee the inviolability of our shores, especially in the early days of a war. It, therefore, fell to the Army to produce a scheme; this necessarily had coast-watching and coast defence as one of its most important items. As no attempt had ever been made to build strategic roads, railways or even provide a telephone system to deal with coast defence, the staff, perforce, had to rely on schemes having a large element of improvisation. In Essex the problem was

1. "The World Crisis," Vol. 1, p. 63.

probably as difficult as in any county. The coast line is much indented with river estuaries, which in most cases have either unreliable cross-communication or none at all. In the southern part large areas of low-lying reclaimed land border the coast, having only farm tracks over the final two or three miles and these well-nigh impassable in winter. This lack of lateral communication made any scheme of defence especially difficult, besides giving an invader several points of ingress by fairly deep water. The Essex coast problem resolved itself into two definite portions, viz., north and south of the River Blackwater. The portion north of the Blackwater was comparatively easily covered by road and railway communication and telephone. That south of the Blackwater is again divided by the River Crouch, with no reliable crossing east of Battlesbridge. It was also ill-provided with roads to the coast-line and very badly served with telephones or telegraph lines in 1914. With such inadequate and unprepared means of communication it is not surprising that the staff decided to make use of the most mobile force on which they could rely. Where roads were available it was obvious that cyclists (either motor or pedal) were the speediest means of communication; in the southern portion a combination of horse and cycle would undoubtedly have been the best, yet, despite this, requests for an allotment of riding horses to co-operate with cyclists were unavailingly urged and grave risks of delay in communication were run. Each cyclist battalion had its allotted portion of coast and its scheme of defence was frequently reviewed by the staff and continuously practised, both in staff rides and with men during annual battalion training. These practices quickly revealed shortcomings of road and rail communication and telephone system, and although it may not be surprising that the authorities would not face the expense of strategic roads or railways (and, in the case of roads, there is always the risk of assistance to invaders), yet it would not have been a very great matter to have supplemented the very inadequate telephone system. The lack of telephones very soon showed itself when Zeppelin and aeroplane raids began. Fortunately, by this time a certain number of field lines had been improvised, but naturally were not as effective as direct permanent lines; also, these field lines could ill be spared from the requirements of the armies in France. The 8th Essex, being posted for a long time to the Essex coast, had a very important role in reporting the approach of aircraft to London. Direct telephonic communication was established between the coast and the War Office or headquarters, Eastern Command, in London, and information was thereby available often within three or four minutes of aircraft being heard or sighted coming in over the coast. Time was of the utmost importance in order to allow aeroplanes time to go up and be in readiness to attack on the arrival of hostile aircraft over London. The 8th Essex were the means of giving warning of

many German air raids, but they were not lucky enough to have any great coup. The Zeppelin which fell at Wigborough in 1916 was within the Cyclists' usual sector, but in those summer months the 8th had been withdrawn into training camp at Wivenhoe and the coast line handed over to recently-formed units. Alarms of possible enemy landings were frequent, especially towards the close of 1914. On November 15th an intimation was given that the next fortnight might see an attempt at landing and that special vigilance was to be maintained. Landing boats towed by launches were expected. Two days later the attention of all commanding officers was particularly called to the necessity for special precautions from the Wednesday to the Saturday of that week. This critical period did not end until November 27th. Then, again, on December 23rd, there was the transmission of intelligence that the enemy might attempt to land troops on December 24th or 25th. As we now know, these fears did not materialize, but they serve to emphasize the value of the service which the Cyclist Battalion performed in watching our coast. On January 5th, 1915, patrols of 'E' Company saved the lives of a number of seamen who had been wrecked on the coast near Colne Point. This night will live in the memory of those who were on duty, for there raged one of the fiercest gales experienced for many years. Despite this fact the patrols kept contact during the night.

DRAFTS FOR THE ARMIES OVERSEAS.

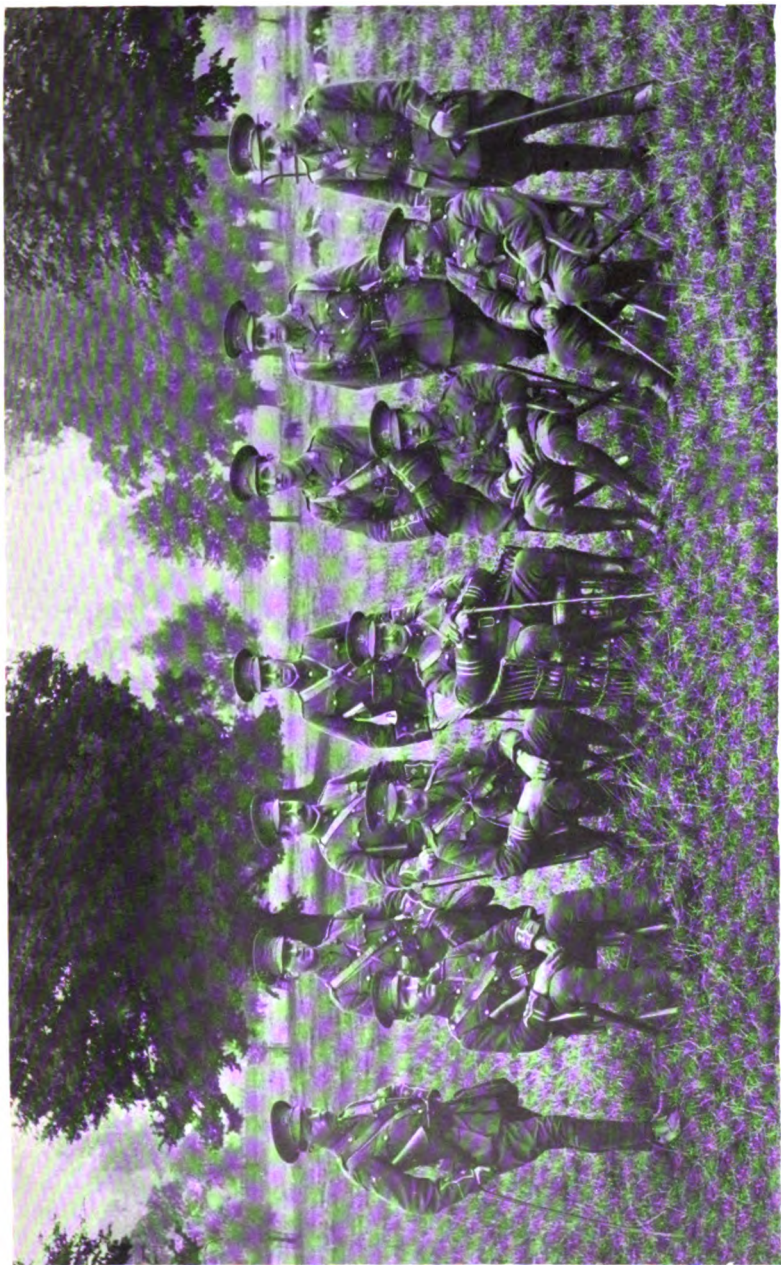
There were fourteen officers serving with the Battalion when it was mobilized and the services rendered by them during the war show to what an extent the personnel of the unit was called upon for duties overseas. Lieut.-Colonel J. C. Tabor, in command, was with the Battalion until July, 1917, when he joined the 13th Rifle Brigade on active service and was in France until November, 1918; Major W. F. Ackland was second-in-command upon embodiment and then was attached to the 4th Army headquarters, when he was appointed to the command of the 8th Essex in 1919. Major C. A. Baily served with the London Regiment abroad and then as A.M.L.O. at Taranto, for which he received the O.B.E. A cordial reunion took place at Taranto on one occasion, when about forty old members of the 1/8th Essex stopped there on their way to join the M.G.C. in Palestine. Major H. Innocent fought with the 10th Essex in France and was awarded the M.C. Lieut.-Colonel W. B. Anderson commanded the 6th Devons in Mesopotamia. Captain W. F. Purdie was recalled from reserve and died on home duty. Captain W. H. Croome became G.S.O. III 29th Division and was killed at the Battle of Cambrai in November, 1917. The manner of his end is told by Captain Stair Gillon in the story of the 29th Division. The divisional headquarters after the British advance were five miles behind the front in the quarry at Quentin Mill, near Gouzeaucourt. "On the morning of the 30th November the hostile gun-fire,

although heavier than usual, did not appear to indicate that an attack was imminent, and the General, who kept early hours, his A.D.C., Captain Nickalls, the G.S.O. II, Captain A. T. Miller, D.S.O., and Captain Croome, G.S.O. III, were finishing breakfast peacefully at 8 a.m., when a rude interruption disturbed the calm of the morning pipe. Some shells began to burst in the quarry and a voice called out that the C.R.A., Brigadier-General E. H. Stevenson, D.S.O., was severely wounded in the knee. This was indeed the case, and he was carried into divisional headquarters. A few minutes later rifle fire at close range told its own tale to ears that had heard it in South Africa. Moreover, shells of a creeping barrage were now falling between the quarry and Gouzeaucourt, and the ground there was perfectly open and exposed to fire from the ridge. In the direction of the enemy, in the grey light of the morning, the chalk downs were covered with men walking back. It was not unlike Epsom on a race day. It was evident that it was a question of flight through the barrage or capture. At the call of the G.O.C., all who could chose the former alternative. General Stevenson had to be left behind in charge of an orderly, also wounded. It is satisfactory to be able to record that though the wave of hostile forces passed through and far beyond the quarry, it receded later before a masterly counter-attack by the Guards, and the C.R.A. and his orderly were rescued early on the following day. Captain Croome and several men were killed, to everyone's deep regret, but the other officers reached Gouzeaucourt unhurt." Captains P. Parry, H. L. Gibson and Attfield were in France with the regular battalions of the Essex Regiment. Captain R. D. Colnett was killed in Palestine in 1918. Captain H. J. Young went to the 1st Essex in France and later became an area commandant. Lieut. G. E. Vaughton was killed when leading a platoon of "W" Company of the 1st Essex in the counter-attack at Cambrai and was buried by the enemy at Masnières. Others to join that Battalion were Lieutenants Colin Work, A. Gardner and Fitch. Lieutenants G. O. Brunwin-Hales and W. J. Shorter were shot down whilst flying in France. Major G. C. Benham and Captain F. H. Wise received the M.C. for gallant conduct with the 11th Battalion. Captain R. B. T. Hill was killed by shell-fire the first time he went up to the trenches with that unit. Captain J. S. Marks will ever be remembered by the 10th Essex for the exceptional pluck shown by him on all occasions. During the critical fighting in 1918 he was seen to knock down five Germans with his fists before being captured. Captain E. G. Stone also led his platoon all day during the battle for the Quadrilateral in 1918, when he was severely wounded, being again wounded as he was carried to the rear. Others to serve with the Battalion were Captain B. R. Radford, Captain B. G. Paul and Lieut. S. Lambert. Captain Paul was afterwards attached to the staff of the 18th Brigade. Captain E. G. Davis went overseas to the Warwickshire Regiment. Lieutenants

E. G. Stone and R. F. Richards also joined the 11th Essex, the former being seriously wounded and mentioned in despatches. Captain C. F. Bland won the D.S.O. with the 10th Essex for gallantry at Albert in August, 1918. The Medical Officer, Lieut.-Colonel Burroughes, was appointed to a divisional staff in France, whilst Captain W. A. Nicholson went as a quartermaster to a battalion of the Lincolnshires. The contribution of the other ranks was no less splendid. It will be remembered that 60 per cent. volunteered for active service on the outbreak of war. This was later increased to 80 per cent. and finally, by exchanges with the Reserve Battalion, embraced all ranks.

Although they had not the satisfaction of fighting with the Battalion in which they enlisted, the order came on July 31st, 1916, at the height of the Battle of the Somme, for all N.C.O.'s and men below the rank of sergeant to proceed overseas. So keen was the desire for service that the sergeants offered to forfeit their rank and a proportion were allowed to go abroad as corporals. The men were sent to the Base Depot at Etaples and posted to various battalions, but a large detachment joined the 10th Essex, where it was acknowledged to be the finest draft the Battalion ever received, later taking part in the successful attack on Thiepval. Others went to the 13th Essex, where they served with distinction, one occasion in particular being at the German counter-attack at Cambrai in December, 1917, when a platoon, under Sergeant Fairbrass, resolved to fight on, although surrounded. One of the best known members of the 8th Essex was Sergeant John Tippins, formerly of the 5th Essex, but who transferred to the 8th in 1913 and went to France as a corporal late in 1914. He served with the 2nd Essex and was killed in 1915 whilst fetching water for his Maxim. He was a well-known Bisley shot, having been in the final stage of the King's Prize Competition in 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911 and 1913. Both he and his father were noted riflemen and did much to improve shooting in Essex. They lived at Mistley and were in demand for the manufacture of match rifles and other arms of precision. "He was not only a very fine shot on the open range," wrote an officer, "but a wonderful fancy shot. I have seen him at entertainments in the evening at ranges of, say, twenty yards, shoot the ash off a cigarette held in a man's mouth, split playing cards and similar feats. He was a man of most buoyant spirits and enthusiasm and without fear." Another well-known cyclist was C.S.M. J. H. Carnall, who won the D.C.M. with the 2nd Essex. The first Cyclists to see active service were a detachment of one officer (Lieut. Attfield) and 20 men, who proceeded overseas in November, 1914, and the survivors of which retained vivid memories of the use of improvised hand grenades made out of jam tins.

The 8th Essex served for some time in the county. When at Great Holland, in February, 1915, the G.O.C. 3rd Army, through Brigadier-General H. Grenfell, complimented all ranks upon the excellent appearance which they presented. "The men



*Standing (from left to right) : Capt. H. Innocent, Lieut. G. C. Benham, Capt. W. A. Nicholson, Quarter Master, Lieut. C. A. B. Allen, Capt. C. A. Ratley, Capt. W. H. Groome, Lieut. H. L. Gibson,
 Sitting (left to right) : Capt. W. B. Anderson, Major W. F. Ackland, Lieut.-Col. J. C. Tabor, Capt. R. M. B. Needham, Adjutant, Suffolk Regiment,
 Major F. J. Warsick, R.A.M.C. (T.F.), M.O.*



Preparing Clacton Pier for Demolition.



St. Peter's Chapel, BRADWELL.

look fit and hard," he said, "and showed that though they had had to do exceptionally arduous work during the last six months, their comfort had received great attention and their welfare always kept in view by those responsible. The Lieut.-General has great pleasure in placing on record his high appreciation of the workmanlike turn-out of the Battalion and the good work they have done." In October, 1917, the 8th were sent to the Kent Coast to relieve another cyclist unit there and were at Margate in January, 1918, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel D. T. Seckham, D.S.O., when orders came for Ireland. The Battalion was first sent in February to Inniskillen, Co. Fermanagh; then in March to Beresford Barracks, The Curragh. During April a move was made to Tulla, Co. Clare; in the following July the 8th were at No. 2 Camp, French Furze, The Curragh, and in October at Naas, Co. Kildare. The Irish mailboat "Leinster" was torpedoed in the Irish Channel on October 10th, with the loss of 527 lives. Among them were five men of the 8th Essex, whose names are recorded on the memorial to the missing at Southampton. From December to March, 1919, the Battalion was at Sligo, where Lieut.-Colonel Seckham handed over command to Lieut.-Colonel W. F. Ackland and, in so doing, wrote a generous tribute of appreciation: "From the day I joined I was immensely struck with the character of the Essex man and my dealings with him have endorsed my opinion of him. It was easy to see *esprit de corps* ran very high in the Battalion and, what was better still, the call of the country has priority over all other claims, however distressing and harassing, for the Regiment. I think the Regiment can look back on the four years with a clear conscience, knowing that they have given ungrudgingly of their best and played the game throughout. I wish particularly to thank you and the Essex officers (proper) for the kindness you showed to me personally, coming amongst you as a stranger. It made my task easy. Without it it would have been impossible to carry on. I think you realized that my chief endeavour was to keep things in the same way as if it had been my own battalion and to leave it on a sound basis." After a stay at Claremorris, the Battalion was again at Sligo in June and in the following September at Galway. At the beginning of 1920 the 8th Essex were disembodied and the cadre reported at Brentwood.

FORMATION OF SECOND UNIT.

Authority was received for the raising of a reserve battalion on September 23rd, 1914, to undertake the defence of the Essex coast, if and when the original unit proceeded overseas. Lieut.-Colonel T. J. Boulter, who had formerly commanded the 8th Essex, was appointed from the Territorial Force Reserve and had the invaluable help of Captain G. C. Benham as adjutant, Lieut. H. L. Gibson, 2nd Lieut. H. J. Young and Colour-Sergeant Instructor W. Young. The Battalion was recruited mainly at Colchester and in suburban Essex. A notable reinforcement

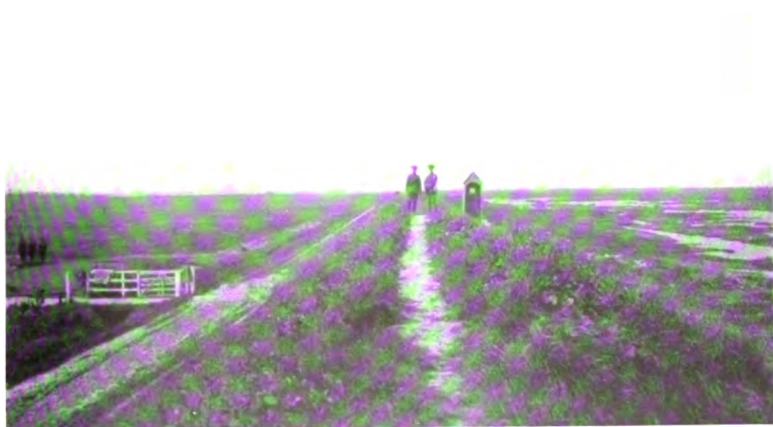
of the personnel was provided by the Automobile Association, whose secretary, Captain Stenson Cooke, with 107 road scouts, joined in a body. Colchester was an ideal centre for the purposes of training. Two drill halls were available, the Castle Park and Abbey Fields were close at hand for drilling, Middlewick Range was a short march away and roads and billets were all that could be desired. A hindrance to training in the early days was the lack of cycles, arms and equipment. Each morning was devoted to drill in the Castle Park, Colchester, and each afternoon a route march of about eleven miles was made on foot. At the end of about two months cycles were supplied and mounted drill was then performed. Rifles arrived more slowly. Seventeen were eventually secured for instructional purposes to train 600 men and after some lapse of time the Battalion was armed with old Martini carbines and underwent a musketry course with these weapons. When the Battalion had been in existence many months Japanese rifles were issued. They were good for shooting, but cumbersome to carry on a bicycle and were ultimately replaced by the Lee Metford rifle. By the end of November the new Battalion had reached its establishment of 22 officers and 624 other ranks, and had, in addition, provided 96 re-enlisted and trained men for the first line, required in consequence of an increase in the establishment of Cyclist Battalions. Before the end of December three companies were sufficiently advanced in training to be sent to the coast. Two of them, under Captains Denton and Bland, went to Walton-on-the-Naze, for coast watching, whilst the third company (Lieut. H. J. Young) was sent to Little Clacton as a support to the sector, Walton—Clacton—St. Osyth. By March 25th, 1915, the whole of the reserve Battalion (then known as 2/8th Essex Cyclists) had been incorporated into the defence forces on the coast. The headquarters were at Great Clacton and the Battalion's area of duty comprised the Clacton Peninsula. Picquets were placed in Martello Towers, coastguard stations and huts, and were relieved from company headquarters, which were billeted in towns a few miles inland. Every part of the coast was patrolled and watched, as the following list of picquet posts will show :—

LATCHINGDON PENINSULA.

Post.	Company.	Company Headquarters.
East End, Roach River	" C "	Rochford.
Creeksea Ferry, Crouch River, right bank	" C "	Rochford.
Fambridge Ferry, Crouch River, left bank	" A "	Burnham.
Burnham Coastguard Station, left bank	" A "	Burnham.
Holliwell Point, Crouch River, left bank	" A "	Burnham.
Tillingham Coastguard Station, Sea Wall	" F "	Southminster.
Marsh House, Sea Wall	" F "	Southminster.
St. Peter's, Bradwell, Sea Wall	" F "	Southminster.
Bradwell Quay, Blackwater River	" F "	Southminster.



Martello Tower, St. Osyth.



Tillingham Post.



Sandy Point, Frinton Golf Links.



Holland Gap.

CLACTON PENINSULA.

Colne Point, Colne River, left bank	" D " Clacton-on-Sea.
Martello Tower, St. Osyth	" D " Clacton-on-Sea.
Jetty, Clacton-on-Sea	" E " Little Clacton.
Clacton Pier (night only), Clacton-on-Sea	" E " Little Clacton.
Clacton Coastguard Station, Clacton-on-Sea	" G " Great Clacton.
Clacton Cliff, Clacton-on-Sea	" G " Great Clacton.
Holland Gap, Little Holland	" G " Great Clacton.
Sandy Point, Frinton	" B " Walton.
Pole Barn Lane, Frinton (Northend)	" B " Walton,
Walton Pier (night only), Walton	" B " Walton.
Walton Coastguard Station, Walton	" B " Walton.

Whilst engaged upon this duty officers and men, with few exceptions, signed on for foreign service, hoping to be employed overseas as a combatant unit; the few who did not sign were transferred to Provisional Battalions. Early in 1916 the Battalion was moved to Mistley, where it was stripped of most of its trained N.C.O.'s and men, who were sent overseas as drafts to other units. Only the officers and a small staff of N.C.O.'s were left and training had to be recommenced with recruits received from the Derby Scheme. A number were found unfit for military service and after medical examination they were transferred to Labour Battalions. The Battalion was thus transformed definitely into a home service unit. It tasted a little real warfare, however, for whilst in a week's operations near Woodbridge the encampment was bombed by Zeppelins. In August, 1916, it was transferred to Foxhall Camp, Ipswich, and in the following November to Boughton Street, near Faversham, Kent. In April, 1917, it returned to Essex, with headquarters at Little Clacton, and resumed coast defence duty. During October the 2/8th were removed to similar work at Hollesley Bay, Suffolk, where an extensive system of coast defences was constructed. The Battalion was issued with trench mortars and an artillery detachment was attached to it. Early in March, 1918, Lieut.-Colonel C. W. W. Burrell succeeded Lieut.-Colonel T. J. Boulter in command. From time to time officers of the 2/8th made application for service overseas and various expedients were adopted to obtain that end. As an instance, Major G. C. Benham, who had been appointed second-in-command in the autumn of 1916, succeeded in being selected to attend the Senior Officers' Course at Aldershot and thence was sent to the 11th Essex in France, where, as stated, he won the Military Cross after being wounded in five places. In March all available officers, N.C.O.'s and men went overseas as reinforcements, leaving only the remnant to carry on. Most of the latter were also despatched later on, finding their way almost immediately into the front line. From April to October, 1918, the Battalion was at Bawdsey and in February, 1919, at Colchester, where the last order, prior to disembodiment, was issued in April.

Among lighter employments the 2/8th found time to issue a periodical "containing a wealth of worldly wisdom for the warriors of the wheel." Among the contributions which throw light upon the point of view of "other ranks" is the humorous contribution of Private Lewinstein, entitled "Those Packs !!!"

We was stationed 'ere in Clacton, we 'ad bayonets and guns ;
We was learned to fire orf bullets if we was to meet the 'Uns ;
We 'ad lovely shiny bandoliers and belts a glorious brown,
And we looked like 'Ousehold Cavalry when goin' through the town.

Then they takes away our rifles and we gets another sort,
Wiv little points ter fix on 'em, I never see such sport,
'Cause when a tall bloke ordered arms at 'shun or else at ease,
'E could 'ardly reach 'is blinkin' gun unless 'e bent 'is knees.

They pinched our belts and bandoliers and calls up all us chaps
And serves us out a sack affair and tons of little straps,
And ses to us, "Just fix 'em up and make 'em into packs,
"Wipe the gravy off of 'em and 'oist 'em on your backs."

We takes our 'Chinese puzzles 'ome and tries to do the trick ;
We gets a pick and shovel wot goes on a little stick.
We fixes up the lot at last—you ort to see us blokes ;
We turns up on the next parade like bloomin' 'arnessed mokes.

The skipper ups and ses to us, "Get overcoats and socks
"And towels and pants and shirts and capes, no empty cardboard box ;
"Strap yer blankets on the top" (we very nearly cried).
"And anything yer wants," 'e ses, "just bring 'em all inside."

We tried to get our bundles on ; we manages at length,
But when we turns out on parade it don't 'arf take some strength !
It's alright when you stand at ease, but marchin', so ter speak,
Makes yer absolutely sartin as yer legs is growin' weak.

Now I argues it this way : If we've got to cart a ton,
Why not issue out to each of us a big 'owitzter gun ;
A motor lorry, also, we could carry on our backs.
'Strewth ! I guess we'd 'ave ter do it if we 'ad room in our packs.

A THIRD LINE UNIT.

In April, 1915, authority was given for a third battalion to be raised and trained at Colchester, the command being given to Captain H. J. Young, of the first Battalion. The full title was 3/8th Cyclist Battalion The Essex Regiment (Third Line Depot). The establishment was four officers and 144 other ranks, but as the actual strength was governed by the estimated requirements of the other two battalions in trained drafts, the numbers actually on the ration strength ranged from 12 to 17 officers and 250 to 300 other ranks. None but foreign service men were accepted for this unit. With the assistance of Sergeant M. Grice, Captain Young set to work once more at Sir Isaacs Walk, Colchester, to repeat the efforts which had made the second Battalion so successful. The early orders of this unit make curious reading. The first one issued contains the names of eleven recruits, the third (seven days later) another 55 men, six of whom appear on the same sheet as appointed to be lance-corporals ! In less than three weeks from the commencement there were considerably over 100 men on the roll and many of these must have been very surprised at their first taste of Army life. Accommodation was in empty houses, handed over by Captain Argent, of the 5th Essex.

Blankets were available, as also were the tools of the cookhouse trade, but here the tale of equipment ceased. No arms or equipment were to be had, not a stitch of uniform clothing nor any of the hundred and one items necessary to make the complete soldierman. Cookery at first was of an elementary character, but a recruit, one Appleton, was found to be a past master in the art and feeding was put on a satisfactory basis. Clothing continued a difficulty, the rough life playing havoc with the civilian suits of the recruits. Although the Ordnance Department came to the rescue with commendable speed, it was not long before some of the garments would well have graced a scarecrow. A legend circulated at this time to the effect that any man who looked as if he might fall out of his clothes or who needed more than one hand occupied to keep himself together would be excused parade. Certain it is that it did really become necessary in the interests of public decency, when inspecting the morning parade, to weed out those in the worst plight, but these were welcomed in billets by the cook and were put to work of equal value to that their comrades were performing in learning the mysteries of forming fours. These early difficulties soon vanished and no troops could have been better furnished or looked after than these were when Ordnance and A.S.C. got busy; clothing, equipment, arms and cycles were of the best, the empty houses became homes from home, and the training was looked on by all ranks as an item of great interest and, in fact, of enjoyment. On May 14th Colour-Sergeant Heath reported for duty from the second line; an old soldier of long experience and fierce demeanour. His way with recruits gave no opportunity for any to forget that they were now soldiers. He it was who lectured on the uses and necessity of discipline to the budding N.C.O.'s in the promotion class and sent cold shivers down the backs of more than one. At this time, also, there were posted to the unit its earliest subalterns, Tyson and Court, both of whom remained with the 3/8th throughout its existence. On June 18th, only two months after the inception of the third line unit, the first men left to reinforce the second line, a draft of 40, to be followed a fortnight later by a further 52, and with these there returned to the 2/8th the redoubtable Colour-Sergeant Heath, replaced shortly by Sergeant J. R. Hesketh, an efficient N.C.O., who had recently returned from the Bisley School of Musketry. Further drafts were necessary to make up the 2/8th to strength and thus, by the 5th of July, the ration strength of the 3/8th was reduced from over 200 to 12 all ranks. Then followed a fresh recruiting campaign. Senior N.C.O.'s, borrowed from the 1/8th and 2/8th, repaired to their home towns for a month to whip up more men. Recruiting "stunts" took place in Southend, a fruitful source of supply at that time. Speeches and lantern slide pictures and appeals at the various music halls were made. By August 10th the strength was over 100 and elementary training was once more in full swing. The War

Office also carried out the experiment of attaching for holiday duty certain cadets of school units. The third line welcomed Sergeants Coombes, Richardson and Symons to their ranks from the Public Schools Contingent, O.T.C., and very helpful these N.C.O.'s were. The officer cadre began to increase rapidly and August saw the arrival of 2nd Lieut. Thompson, from the 1/8th, and of 2nd Lieut. S. Lambert, of the 4th Seaforth Highlanders, fresh from the mud of Aubers Ridge and Neuve Chapelle, followed later by Amos, Oddey, H. H. Jones (from L.R.B.), Hillman, Thornton, F. Lambert, (another Seaforth Highlander), Gillings, Barwell, Critchley, Wiggins, Heap and Fitch, the two last-named being of the original unit of the Essex Yeomanry. Recruiting continued briskly and drafts proceeded with great regularity to the two coast watching battalions, the demands upon which at this time were great, owing to the constant call by technical and other units for men with experience in special trades. In October the third line commander, Captain Young, was promoted to the rank of Major. January 19th, 1916, ushered in a change which was to have far-reaching effects. Various sections of the Military Service Act were now effective and recruiting conditions changed. Men were called up in addition to those who came forward voluntarily. Many also in provisional units were allotted for duty in first and second line battalions and these being posted first to the third line depots increased the strength of the latter for a time enormously. At this time, too, a visit of inspection was paid to the unit by Colonel Heard, commanding the Third Line East Anglian Division at Wendover. A thorough inspection was made, both in billets and in the field, and the inspecting officer expressed himself as exceedingly satisfied with all he had seen, more especially, he said, because he found the unit industriously doing its job, although not immediately under the eye of its superior commander. In March came orders for the abolition of certain units, including all those third line cyclist units whose first lines were not actually overseas. An effort was made by Colonel Heard to keep the 3/8th intact in some form or another, but this was unavailing and he thereupon offered to absorb into his training staff those officers and N.C.O.'s of the 3/8th who had been instrumental in bringing the unit to the state of efficiency in which he had found it; of these, Lieut. Tyson joined the staff of the Hertford School of Instruction, whilst C.S.M. Hesketh and 12 sergeants and corporals were absorbed into the training establishment at Wendover. C.Q.M.S. Brice was gazetted to a lieutenancy in the Army Cyclist Corps and posted to the 66th Divisional Company. The remaining personnel was sent to the 1/8th and the 2/8th.

THE CYCLISTS' SERVICE.

A year or more after the war, when it became obvious that many Territorial units were likely to receive no special recognition of either their pre-war preparations or war services, strong

representations were made to Territorial Force Associations in order to try and obtain from the War Office some rewards or consideration for the Cyclist units. Early in 1921 some Territorial Force Associations requested units to put forward the names of individuals who were considered deserving of recognition either for their pre-war or war services. The following letter by Colonel J. C. Tabor deals with matters as affecting the Battalion : " I wish particularly to bring forward the names of the undermentioned officers for consideration for reward in view of their services while under my command previous to and during the late war. I desire to preface my remarks regarding their individual services by stating that I only had one opportunity from the outbreak of war until I relinquished the command of the 1/8th Cyclist Battalion The Essex Regiment in July, 1917, of sending forward the name of an officer for reward. (That recommendation was not granted). No doubt this lack of opportunity, as compared with other units, was partly due to the fact that the 1/8th was almost continuously on the Essex Coast and was only attached to various Divisions or directly under an Army for a few months at a time, and was never permanently with any Brigade. No officer of this Battalion received any mention, honour or special reward for any work during the time he was with the Battalion, although some of these officers obtained rewards later in the war, when attached to other units overseas. All officers of the Battalion were excluded from participation overseas in the earlier stages of the war by being obliged to remain with the Battalion, thus being prevented from serving in the more active theatres of the war, for which their pre-war training had fitted and entitled them. In July, 1916, every N.C.O. and man of the 1/8th Cyclist Battalion The Essex Regiment, below the rank of sergeant, was sent overseas, all the officers and sergeants being kept in England to train recruits unfit for general service. Later these officers and sergeants were sent to various units in France, thus having no chance of service overseas with their own companies or platoons. The unit was one of the first in Essex to volunteer for general service, but, despite this and repeated applications to higher authority to be allowed to proceed overseas either as cyclists or infantry, the Battalion never left the United Kingdom. On the outbreak of war the 8th Essex was solely responsible for coast watching from Shoebury to Harwich and remained responsible, except for short intervals, in the summer months (when other newly-formed units were drafted in) until 1916. It was also responsible for aircraft-reporting during this time. The first winter was a continuous strain without relief from other units. Practically all arrangements for defence, accommodation and rationing on the actual coast-line had to be improvised. The unit provided a Special Service Section the first day of the Precautionary Period, of which there was no previous warning, and mobilized as a unit in its war positions on the coast in one

day, i.e., the first day of mobilization. The officers recommended below were members of the unit before the war (in some cases with considerable service) and were chiefly instrumental and responsible for the unit being up to strength in other ranks in July, 1914, and mobilizing efficiently and carrying out its role of coast defence without any unfavourable comment during the whole period during which its responsibility lasted." These recommendations were put forward by the Territorial Force Association to the higher authorities, but without result, and the paragraph in the above letter, "No member of the 1/8th Cyclist Battalion The Essex Regiment received any mention, honour or special reward for any work during the time he was with the Battalion," still remains true.

Another unit which did service during the war also had association with the 8th Essex. It was the 7th Provisional Cyclist Company, attached to the 7th Provisional Brigade. It consisted of men of the 1/8th and 2/8th who were not accepted for foreign service and who were then incorporated into units definitely allotted to the task of coast defence.

When the war was over it was not deemed necessary to keep in being the Cyclist Battalions for the purpose of coast watching, so the 8th Essex was not revived. In its place was recruited the East Anglian Divisional Signals, with an establishment of 270 of all ranks. Thus came the end, after twelve years of existence, during the latter part of which valuable national service was rendered in guarding the coast and supplying drafts, comprising 2,000 of all ranks, for duty with units overseas. The work was well done and deserves to be remembered with gratitude and pride by all Essex men and women and those who have an appreciation for efficient voluntary military service.



APPENDIX A.

WORK OF THE MEDICAL UNITS AT THE FIRST BATTLE OF GAZA.

Comment having been made concerning the arrangements for the treatment and evacuation of casualties, it has been thought necessary, in justice to the medical units of the 54th Division, to give particulars of their service during the battle and to show the aid which was given the casualties of the 16th Brigade.

The Record of the 3rd East Anglian Field Ambulance (Major Troup, R.A.M.C.) states:—

It was quite dark when we reached our bivouac ground at In Seirat on the night of the 25th of March and, consequently, we were unable to see the nature of our surroundings. Having had a long day on the march, we were glad to seize the opportunity of resting and we were soon asleep on the ground covered by our blankets. Rumour had it that the Division were to attack Gaza the following day, but battle orders did not reach our Colonel till nearly midnight. We were disturbed in the early hours of the 26th by the sound of cavalry and artillery passing quite close to us in the darkness. We were up at 0400, and to our surprise found ourselves enveloped in a thick fog, the first we had seen in Palestine. This delayed the British troops in taking up their battle position and, no doubt, contributed to the disappointing result which followed the operations of the next two days.

Our orders were that the Bearer Division of the Field Ambulance was to move forward with the 161st (Essex) Brigade, while "B" and "C" Tent Sub-Divisions were to form a Divisional Dressing Station near Deir-el-Bela.

Under Captains Swindells, Goodman and Ellwood, the Bearers moved off about 0600, with the Essex Brigade, and later on the Tent Sub-Divisions moved to Deir-el-Bela, where a suitable site was chosen near the Rafa-Gaza Road for a dressing station. Fortunately the fog cleared about 1000, and from a ridge near our dressing station we caught a glimpse of the sea through a gap in the sand-hills about a mile away to the west. To the east was the "plain" of Bela, about a mile or more wide, covered with ripening barley, and in the far east the rugged hills of Judea became dimly visible. The dressing station was soon ready for the reception of patients, but although we could hear the sounds of battle from the time the fog lifted, no wounded reached the dressing station that day. About 1700, by order of the A.D.M.S., "C" Tent Sub-Division, under Major Turtle, moved off from Deir-el-Bela to join the Bearers with the Essex Brigade, marching by In Seirat, where it was hoped a guide would be found. No guide could be got and, consequently, the detachment

had to spend the night at In Seirat. In the early morning of the 27th, under the guidance of Lieut. Turner, of the 7th Essex, it resumed its march, going via Sheik Neban. It was met by a staff officer of the Essex Brigade, who informed Major Turtle that his detachment was urgently needed at the front, as the Essex Brigade had been in action the previous evening and had suffered numerous casualties. They pushed on with all speed, but in passing over some open ground they were seen by the Turks and shelled—three camels being killed and a native driver wounded. They had to seek shelter in a gully until the firing eased, when Major Turtle, with part of the equipment and transport, hurried forward and ultimately reached Captain Swindells and his party, leaving the tents and remainder of the equipment under Sergeant Sumner and five or six men.

This party under Sergeant Sumner were overtaken during the early part of the day by Lieut.-Colonel Troup, who had decided to go forward to ascertain the situation, as no news had reached him at the divisional dressing station, either on the previous day or on that morning. He proceeded towards the Wadi Ghuzzi, where he met numerous wounded from the Essex Brigade, who were in a very exhausted condition and were unable to proceed without transport to the divisional dressing station. He, therefore, decided to form a dressing station on the flat ground round Sheik Neban, near to which the 2nd East Anglian Field Ambulance, under Lieut.-Colonel, Bremner, had established a post to deal with casualties in the Norfolk and Suffolk Brigade.

With as little delay as possible, tents were erected and dressings and medical comforts got ready for the wounded, who were now arriving in large numbers on foot and in sand-carts. Sergeant Sumner and his men worked very hard under most difficult conditions, for they had only a limited quantity of equipment and the O.C. was the only medical officer present during the greater part of the day. A word of praise is due to Q.M.S. Holbrook, Sergeant Sumner and the men for the way in which they worked to ensure the comfort of the wounded. Valuable help was given by our friends of the 2nd East Anglian Field Ambulance. Serious cases were sent back to the divisional dressing station as quickly as the limited number of sandcarts would allow. Up to about 1800 some 350 cases had been dealt with at this dressing station.

About 1900, just after sunset, a divisional staff officer arrived and informed Lieut.-Colonel Troup that our Division had been ordered to retire under cover of darkness and it was necessary that all wounded should be sent back to the main dressing station within the next two hours. It was difficult to see how this could be accomplished with our limited transport, but we were determined to do our utmost. The camel cacolets and sand-carts at hand were loaded with serious cases and the walking cases were collected and sent back under a guide to Deir-el-Bela.

More wounded, however, were constantly arriving from the front and at 2200, after the last load was despatched, we had fifty or more wounded, most of them serious cases, left on our hands. The situation was serious and it looked as if the wounded and the Field Ambulance personnel might fall into the hands of the enemy, for, so far as we could ascertain, there were no infantry between us and the Turks. About this time the staff officer returned and, seeing our difficult position, he succeeded in getting half a battalion of the Norfolk Regiment, which happened to be passing near by, to wait and help to carry the wounded.

Stretchers were borrowed from the 2nd East Anglian Field Ambulance, on which the serious cases were loaded and made comfortable and ready for the journey back. It was not, however, until 0200 on the following morning (28th), when no more wounded were arriving from the front, that we were able to get all our wounded dressed and placed on stretchers, and had buried our dead and were ready to move.

A conference took place between the senior officers of the Norfolk Battalion, Lieut.-Colonel Bremner and Lieut.-Colonel Troup, as to the best route to take on the journey to the divisional dressing station. No one knew the country, but Lieut.-Colonel Troup, on his way the previous morning from Deir-el-Bela, had "taken in" the general lie of the ground and he was fairly confident that he could find his way back. He was, therefore, appointed "leader" and soon after 0200 the march of the wounded convoy, consisting of about 70 stretchers, began. In front was the "leader" with a hurricane lantern, and Lieut.-Colonel Bremner, whose personnel and wounded formed part of the convoy, was at the rear. The night was dark and cool. Overhead the stars were shining brightly. The only sounds to break the stillness of the night were the noise of our own marching, the occasional discharge of a rifle in the distance and the howls of packs of jackals which were scouring the battlefield.

At first the going was fairly level, but as we approached the ridge we had to cross the track became steeper and more rough. Halts had to be made every few minutes to make the wounded more comfortable or to rest the tired bearers. It seemed a long journey. About 0400 a figure suddenly appeared in front and challenged our leader. He turned out to be a sentry on outpost duty belonging to the 52nd (Lowland) Division, which had been brought up to cover the retirement of the other Divisions. This soldier informed us that we were going towards Gaza. Notwithstanding this opinion, our leader felt confident that we were in the right direction and we moved on. We were now getting towards the top of the ridge and the road was less steep. About half an hour later a group of figures loomed up in the darkness. They were part of the Divisional Staff on their way back from the battlefield, and, being uncertain of their position and hearing our approach, they took the opportunity of exchanging views as to the direction of In Seirat and Deir-el-Bela. Their senior

officer and our leader were in entire agreement as to the position of these places and so, mutually assured, they moved off to In Seirat while we continued on towards Deir-el-Bela.

We had just passed the top of the ridge about 0500 and the going was now slightly downhill, when a tent became dimly visible about 50 yards ahead. This was occupied by a detachment of the Lowland Division, who directed us to a section of their Field Ambulance near by. Dawn was now breaking and, fortunately, having been able to cross the ridge out of the enemy's view before daylight, we rested at this field ambulance station. Our wounded were able to get some nourishment and the Field Ambulance supplied us with some transport. We ultimately reached our divisional dressing station at Deir-el-Bela about 1100 very tired, but pleased that we had accomplished our task.

Soon after our arrival we were glad to welcome Major Turtle, Captain Swindells and the other personnel of the Bearer Division on their return from the advanced dressing station. They had had undergone a most trying and difficult time. The Essex Brigade had to retire at dusk on the 26th to a position below Mansura Ridge, which left the advanced dressing station out on the plateau between the firing lines, and the ambulance had considerable difficulty in getting casualties back to a sheltered position. Major Turtle, on his arrival at the advanced dressing station, had requested Captain Swindells and Captain Ellwood to proceed to the dressing station at Sheik Neban for a rest, which they much needed, but with characteristic devotion to duty, these officers asked to be allowed to remain and help with the difficult situation. After a hard and trying day on the 27th, Major Turtle was called to the Essex Brigade headquarters and informed that the Brigade was retiring that night to In Seirat under cover of darkness. He mentioned that he had a considerable number of casualties and was without sufficient transport to convey them back, and was told that those he could not evacuate he must leave in charge of a few bearers and follow with his men in rear of the Brigade. He left Sergeant Wright and Privates Henderson, Bates, Strudwick and Robson with the wounded, and in the darkness followed the Brigade over very rough ground, ultimately reaching the Waddi Gluzzi, where the party rested till daybreak on the 28th, before proceeding over the ridge to regain the dressing station at Deir-el-Bela.

The Divisional Dressing Station at Bela was still crowded with wounded on the 28th, and all hands were kept busy until late at night, including the personnel from the advanced dressing station and the dressing station at Sheik Neban, who, despite their fatigue, worked with commendable zeal. Next day additional transport was provided and all the wounded were rapidly evacuated to the 54th Casualty Clearing Station at Khan Yunis.

During the day (28th) Major Turtle and Captain Swindells, with praiseworthy pluck, and tired as they were, set out with sand-carts to endeavour to get in touch with the casualties left

near Mansura Ridge. They were subjected to some rifle fire on their way to the site of the advanced dressing station, which they found vacant. News reached us later by a message dropped by an enemy aeroplane that the wounded were being cared for by the Turkish Army Medical Corps.

The 1st East Anglian Field Ambulance (Major W. D. Watson, R.A.M.C.) also rendered considerable assistance to the 161st Brigade. It was attached to the 162nd Brigade and received orders from the A.D.M.S. to leave In Seirat and report at 06.30 on the 26th March. On arriving there no one was found to report to, and, noticing a patch of vegetation some 1,500 yards east, they proceeded there and found water fit for horses and camels to drink. The O.C., after some difficulty, succeeded in reporting personally to the Brigade Commander, who said he would issue orders to the Ambulance later. These orders were received at midnight and were that the Ambulance was to move to the Wadi Gluzze and up the Wadi, reporting to him at El Sire at 06.00 on the 27th. Upon the Ambulance arriving opposite El Sire, Captain Hall was sent to report, as ordered, at El Sire, but he could find no one there. The O.C. then set out and succeeded in locating Divisional Headquarters, but was unable to get in touch with the A.D.M.S. He learnt from a Signals officer the whereabouts of the 162nd Brigade and, on returning to his Ambulance, sent a party, under Captain Blackwood, with Captains Hamilton and Rippon, to the 162nd Brigade. A dressing station was opened on the south-western side of the Wadi, just below Red House. Here were received large numbers of wounded from the 161st Brigade, as well as other troops. Among these was Colonel Gibbons, O.C. of the 1/5th Essex. Receiving no other orders, the O.C. set out in the afternoon and again found Divisional Headquarters, which had moved, and then saw the A.D.M.S., who said orders would be sent later to return to In Seirat. These orders were received about 22.00 and the Ambulance moved down the Wadi, cacolets and sand carts being loaded to the full, with a large number of wounded walking. On arrival opposite Sheikh Nebhan an earnest request was received from the O.C. 1/3rd Field Ambulance for the loan of transport and, by re-arranging the already crowded transport, some cacolets were handed over. Great difficulty was experienced in finding a track and halts were necessarily frequent. The walking wounded had to be wakened, having fallen asleep from fatigue, when ready to move again. In Seirat was finally reached at 06.00.

"Captain Blackwood's party," writes Captain Hamilton (now Lieut.-Colonel J. L. Hamilton, M.C.), "quickly got in touch with the 162nd Brigade and found a dressing station immediately in rear of the 11th Londons and at once started to evacuate the wounded. All the available transport was quickly used up and, whilst waiting for more, shelters from the sun were improvised by blankets and boards taken from the sand carts.

Many of the severely wounded were kept at the dressing station all day with the idea of moving them in more comfort in the cool of the evening. At this time all the troops near suffered from lack of water, as the camels with fantasses had not arrived. The wounded, however, had sufficient water from the Field Ambulance supply. Throughout the day the transport were kept busy without ceasing evacuating the wounded. The Brigade Commander came up to the Section and spoke optimistically of the success of the Division. To our very great surprise, just as it was getting dusk, orders were received to return to the site of the night before. At that time it was quite impossible to move, as we had a lot of wounded and no transport. It was not until the infantry had passed us in their retirement that sufficient transport was available. Some of this was then lent to the 1/3rd Field Ambulance and all the remaining wounded were loaded four or five, instead of two, in a sandcart, men with fractured legs having to be loaded on cacolets. Some wounded prisoners were on riding horses. Captain Blackwood was very keen that nothing should be left and, therefore, ordered a small party to carry equipment on stretchers and follow as soon as possible. This party he personally supervised. On the way back all the blankets from the wounded were handed out to the two companies of infantry which had been detailed to carry wounded. On reaching the Wadi Ghuzze, Captain Hall's section was encountered and the wounded and transport were handed over to him, Captain Hamilton returning to Captain Blackwood to help him with his baggage party. The two sections, under Captain Hall, marched all night and handed over the wounded to the C.C.S. at Belah in the early hours of the morning. Captain Blackwood's party carried stretchers in relays all through the night and reached Belah at 04.00, men and officers in a very exhausted condition. Difficulty was experienced in finding the way. Corporal Fox, with a lantern, and an officer marching ahead, discovered a route which saved considerable time.



APPENDIX B.

RAID BY THE 1/5th ESSEX ON THE TURKISH POSITION SOUTH OF THE RIVER AUJA.

The following account has been contributed by Lieut. Cyril F. J. Keeling, M.C., who led the raid :—

I was called to Battalion headquarters on the morning of November 28th, 1917, and told by Major Wilson, who was in command of the Battalion, that the Brigadier had ordered him to drive in a night post that the Turks had established on the south side of the River Auja. We both visited Brigade Headquarters and Brig.-General Marriott Dodington explained that the artillery and machine gun observation posts had reported enemy activity south of the river. He had visited the artillery post and seen indications of a post having been established, to hold, in his estimation, about twelve men. This he pointed out was obviously to cover the remains of the bridge crossing the river, and a danger to any night patrols which had to keep the bridge under observation during the night. I was ordered to raid this position that night, drive in the enemy, capture prisoners and, above all, destroy the bridge, which had been partially restored by the Turks. I was told that I could have 40 N.C.O.'s and men. I should like at this point to say that, as I had only been with this Battalion nine days, I was unacquainted with the men and had to rely on what I was told. My plan was to divide my party into two sections, the first, under Sergeant Upchurch, to take up a position immediately in front of the supposed enemy post, to draw the fire, if any, and to cover the other party, who, under myself, were to take up a position on the right flank of the post, with one flank on the river bank and the other in touch with the right flank of the covering party. I proposed getting into position at 7.45 p.m. and arranged with the artillery to send over a salvo at 8 p.m., upon which my flanking party were to rush the position. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a bright moonlight night, and although I got my men into position unobserved, he spotted the frontal party directly they left the lines. He immediately opened up intense rifle and machine gun fire, and I realized that many more than twelve Turks were in front of me, and any attempt to withdraw would bring a Turkish rush resulting in my party being very probably wiped out. I had very little time to decide in, but managed to get word to Sergeant Upchurch that he was to abandon our first plan and attack with me. At zero over came the shrapnel and in we went. Sergeant Upchurch was the first man on his feet and immediately fell back dead. I sent Sergeant Piper across to the frontal party to hold them and bring them on, hoping that this converging attack would

unnerved the Turk and give him the impression that he was up against something big. As I had hoped, the men, infuriated at the death of Sergeant Upchurch, rushed clean through the first position, and the Turk was flying back to the bridge and home, convinced that the whole British Army was on their heels. It was an experience that I shall carry all my life to see those two thin lines of Territorials converging on to a seething mass of Turks, all fighting to get over the bridge. By this time the Turkish batteries were getting busy and had shut down a barrage behind us. We each carried four Mills bombs to destroy the bridge, but these went into the mass of Turks to speed them over into a smashing machine gun barrage that our gunners had got on the bridge. We could actually see their bullets whipping up the dust and they must have caught many of the enemy. Some of these by now terrified men broke back to us and were taken prisoner; others jumped into the river. At this point Major Lawrence opened up with all his guns on to the enemy positions on the north bank of the river and, by so doing, kept the Turk from helping his men. I waited for no more. Private Cook, carrying a machine gun, dashed straight through the barrage towards our own lines. We disabled two other guns and threw them into the river. I then got my men and the prisoners moving off to the right to round the barrage and to avoid the frontal fire, which was getting very heavy. On the way Cook came back through the barrage to help in removing the casualties, an extremely brave action. My report after the raid stated that we had killed at least 50 of the enemy and that they must have lost many more in getting through the machine gun and artillery barrage. We brought back eight prisoners, one machine gun and one donkey, complete with panniers and tools. It was not until after the prisoners had been interrogated that it was known that there had been over 200 enemy in the positions I raided. Neither I nor anyone else saw any blankets or Turks asleep. Actually we raided a strong working party, well covered by five different covering parties, each of whom we drove in before reaching the main party. It was obvious that the Turk was very anxious to cover the approaches to the bridge and was digging posts for that purpose. So strong was this desire that a party that went out later to retrieve my casualties and any material were driven in at once, the Turk having rushed his men back directly things quietened down. The conduct of the men during the raid was worthy of the best traditions of the British Army. I had come straight from France, where I had seen some stiffish fighting, but nowhere had I seen such splendid work under conditions that were both unpleasant and unexpected—work, too, by men, several of whom, like myself, were born in Southend-on-Sea.

APPENDIX C.

LIST OF HONOURS AWARDED TO OFFICERS AND OTHER RANKS OF THE BATTALIONS OF THE 161st BRIGADE.

Below is given a list of honours awarded to officers and other ranks of the four Battalions of the Essex Infantry Brigade, taken from Part II Orders. Though trouble has been taken to make the list as complete as possible, it is probable that names of officers and men have been omitted and, if so, it is hoped that they will inform the publishers, so that the necessary additions may be made in any subsequent edition.

4th BATTALION.

2nd Lieut. A. J. Beach, mentioned in despatches; Lieut. L. F. Bittles, M.C., mentioned in despatches; Captain S. Carhart, M.C.; Captain G. M. Gibson, mentioned in despatches; Lieut. C. E. Grahame, mentioned in despatches; Lieut. C. H. W. Grimwood, mentioned in despatches; Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Hulton, D.S.O., mentioned in despatches; Lieut.-Colonel E. J. Jameson, mentioned in despatches, D.S.O.; Major G. Jones, M.C.; Major R. W. Lee, M.C., mentioned in despatches; 2nd Lieut. A. Newman, mentioned in despatches, M.C., Serbian Cross of Karageorge; Captain R. A. Reddie, 3rd Norfolks, M.C.; Captain R. H. J. Stronge, mentioned in despatches; Lieut.-Colonel B. C. Wells, mentioned in despatches, D.S.O.

Private J. Arkend, Silver Medal of St. George; Lance-Sergeant W. Barnard, M.M.; Private W. Benning, Gold Medal awarded by King of Serbia for distinguished service; Private D. Bibby, M.M.; Sergeant J. Y. Bridge, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant R. S. Brutey, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant E. Clark, mentioned in despatches; C.S.M. H. G. Cruse, mentioned in despatches; R.Q.M.S. A. W. Davies, D.C.M.; Private S. Denny, M.M.; Sergeant W. Earey, M.M.; C.Q.M.S. H. S. Evans, mentioned in despatches; C.S.M. T. R. Fish, D.C.M. and Bar; Sergeant T. G. Frost, mentioned in despatches; Private W. Gaylor, M.M.; Sergeant E. W. Gillingham, mentioned in despatches; Private W. D. Gollar, M.M.; Private S. Gower, M.S.M.; Private W. J. Grange, M.M.; Private T. W. Green, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant A. Harris, D.C.M.; Private F. H. Hilbury, M.M.; Sergeant G. F. Hine, M.M.; Private A. Hoy, M.M.; C.Q.M.S. J. W. Hunwicks, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches; Sergeant J. H. Hye, M.M.; C.S.M. W. J. Jessop, mentioned in despatches; Private H. Kifford, M.M.; Sergeant P. Lewsley, mentioned in despatches; Private H. F. W. Lodge, mentioned in despatches; Private A. Luddington, M.M.; Sergeant J. McCarthy, M.M.; Private E. McGrath, M.S.M.;

Private H. A. Measter, M.M.; Lance-Sergeant J. Merrington, M.M., D.C.M.; Sergeant J. Page, M.M.; Sergeant-Major F. Palot, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches; Private A. Peacock, M.M.; Sergeant W. J. Price, mentioned in despatches; Private W. Purkis, M.M.; Private G. S. Quilter, M.M.; Lance-Sergeant A. Rainbow, M.M.; Private W. H. Robinson, mentioned in despatches; Corporal J. W. Rush, mentioned in despatches, D.C.M.; Sergeant S. B. Scott, M.M.; Private J. J. Smith, mentioned in despatches; Lance-Corporal H. Tomlinson, M.M.; Private W. Welsh, M.M.; Private H. Willis, M.M. .

1/5th BATTALION.

Lieut. B. Archer, M.C.; Captain (Staff) (Acting Major F. G. Bright, M.C., mentioned in despatches twice, Order of Nile (Fourth Class)); Lieut. R. J. S. Bateman, mentioned in despatches; Lieut. R. H. S. Colman (Machine Gun Corps), M.C.; 2nd Lieut. (Temporary Captain) A. Colvin, M.C. mentioned in despatches; Lieut. H. S. Calverley, M.C.; Captain E. B. Deakin, M.C., D.S.O., mentioned in despatches; Lieut. J. F. Finn, M.C., mentioned in despatches; Lieut. J. L. French, mentioned in despatches; Lieut. T. E. Fry, mentioned in despatches; Lieut.-Colonel T. Gibbons, D.S.O., Territorial Decoration, mentioned in despatches, Order of Nile (3rd Class); 2nd Lieut. C. F. J. Keeling, M.C.; 2nd Lieut. E. J. Lockwood, M.C.; Lieut. H. Moller (Trench Mortars), mentioned in despatches; Captain C. Portway, M.C.; Captain G. E. Tompson, mentioned in despatches; 2nd Lieut. E. M. G. Wray, D.S.O., mentioned in despatches; Captain (Temporary Major) W. E. Wilson, D.S.O., mentioned in despatches; Lieut.-Colonel P. C. Yonge (Trench Mortars), D.S.O., mentioned in despatches.

Private E. Bolton, M.M.; Sergeant F. Barnes, mentioned in despatches; Lance-Corporal W. Beck, M.M.; Corporal H. J. Blundon, M.M.; Private (Acting-Corporal) P. Byford, M.M.; Corporal F. Collins, D.C.M.; C.Q.M.S. J. E. V. Coote, D.C.M.; Private A. E. Cox, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant W. Cooper, D.C.M.; Private E. W. Cook, M.M.; Private E. Clark, M.M.; Sergeant W. Chapman, mentioned in despatches; Corporal C. Cunningham, mentioned in despatches; Private (Acting Lance-Sergeant) A. Coates, Serbian Silver Medal; Sergeant A. Drury, D.C.M.; Private T. Davidson, mentioned in despatches; Corporal (Acting Lance-Sergeant) B. W. Dann, M.M.; Sergeant B. Fenner, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches; Sergeant W. J. Fell, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant F. Foster, Medaille Militaire; Sergeant C. Green, M.M.; Private T. W. Gray, mentioned in despatches; C.S.M. H. Goodwin, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant W. J. Gafney, D.C.M.; Private W. Hilsdon, D.C.M.; Private L. G. Harvey, M.M.; Private B. Hockley, M.M.; R.S.M. F. James, D.S.M.; Private E. Jemson, mentioned in despatches; Corporal R. Jarrold, mentioned in

despatches; Private E. A. G. Jordan, M.M.; Private E. Lockwood, mentioned in despatches; Private (Acting Lance-Sergeant) E. A. Lofts, M.M.; Private F. Long, mentioned in despatches; Private W. J. Mears, M.M.; Corporal (R.A.M.C. attached) T. C. Main, D.C.M.; Sergeant W. A. Osborne, M.M.; Sergeant A. G. Piper, M.M.; Private (Acting Corporal) W. Ransom, M.M.; Sergeant H. N. Rand, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches; Private O. Rand, mentioned in despatches; C.Q.M.S. H. Reed, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches; Corporal A. E. Ruffell, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches; Lance-Corporal A. Scott, mentioned in despatches; Private H. Smith, mentioned in despatches; Private J. Story, M.M.; Sergeant W. Simmonds, M.M.; Private J. J. Smith, M.M.; Private S. Smith, M.M.; Private L. Shergold, Serbian Silver Medal; Lance Corporal W. M. Town, M.M.; Sergeant A. E. Thompson, M.S.M.; Sergeant E. White, M.M., mentioned in despatches; C.S.M. F. Wilson, D.C.M.; Sergeant H. Watsham, D.C.M.

6th BATTALION.

Lieut. C. W. B. Adams, mentioned in despatches; Lieut. E. D. Bentliff, mentioned in despatches; Lieut.-Colonel W. J. Bowker, D.S.O., C.M.G., mentioned in despatches; Lieut. H. H. Clark, mentioned in despatches; Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Ewer, D.S.O., mentioned in despatches twice; Lieut. H. G. Mansfield, M.C.; Major D. H. Rose, M.C.; Major J. L. Sheldon, M.C.; Lieut. C. W. Silverwood, mentioned in despatches; Captain R. O'H. Smith, mentioned in despatches; Captain E. W. Tee, mentioned in despatches; 2nd Lieut. D. Thomson, M.C.; 2nd Lieut. W. A. Trumble, D.C.M.; Major B. J. Ward, mentioned in despatches.

Sergeant C. W. Bateman, M.M.; Private H. J. Berley, Silver Medal awarded by King of Serbia; Lance-Sergeant S. A. Bond, M.M.; Private H. Browne, Gold Medal awarded by King of Serbia; Sergeant O. Cashbourne, M.M.; Private E. Cleall, M.M.; Private R. Colley, M.M.; Private T. V. Davies, M.M.; Corporal H. Edwards, M.M.; Lance-Sergeant A. F. Fiddes, D.C.M., M.M.; Private A. L. Foord, mentioned in despatches; C.S.M. C. Furby, mentioned in despatches; Private A. H. Gardner, M.M.; Private A. R. Garratt, M.M.; Private H. W. George, D.C.M.; Private W. H. Heath, M.M.; R.Q.M.S. C. J. Hicks, M.S.M.; Sergeant J. Jackson, mentioned in despatches; Private A. King, M.M.; R.S.M. W. Lambert, M.S.M., Medaille Militaire, mentioned in despatches twice; Sergeant-Drummer E. C. Lee, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches; Sergeant A. J. E. Ling, M.M.; Lance-Corporal A. V. Lloyd, M.M.; Private A. C. Lodge, M.M.; Private W. E. Mathews, M.M.; C.Q.M.S. C. Mears, M.M.; Private T. J. Moynagh, M.M.; Sergeant H. J. Peck, M.M.; Corporal B. W. Peters, M.M.; Sergeant G. W. Phillimore, M.M.; Sergeant W. E. Pratt, D.C.M.; Sergeant G. H. Read, mentioned in despatches; C.S.M. F. J. Rolph,

D.C.M. ; Sergeant F. Russell, mentioned in despatches ; Sergeant A. H. F. Shute, M.M. ; Private C. E. Smith, M.M. ; Sergeant S. Spencer, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; R.Q.M.S. A. G. Templing, mentioned in despatches twice ; Private E. R. Trott, M.M. ; Sergeant J. Truss, mentioned in despatches ; Private H. Turpin, mentioned in despatches ; Private C. G. Vizard, mentioned in despatches ; Sergeant H. S. Ware, M.M. ; Sergeant H. S. Watts, mentioned in despatches ; Private W. F. Whitmarsh, M.M. ; Private F. J. Woodford, M.M.

1/7th BATTALION.

Lieut. J. H. F. Benford, M.C. ; 2nd Lieut. G. C. Berry, M.C. ; Captain F. J. Camm, M.C. and Bar ; Lieut. W. C. Cooper, m mentioned in despatches ; Lieut.-Colonel C. L. Flick, mentioned in despatches, C.M.G. ; Lieut. L. F. Mumford, mentioned in despatches ; Lieut. H. R. Pelly, mentioned in despatches ; Captain J. Schofield, M.C. ; Captain S. S. Secombe, M.C. and Bar ; 2nd Lieut. C. D. Slatford, M.C. ; Captain R. A. Stubbings, mentioned in despatches ; Captain A. E. Turk, mentioned in despatches ; Lieut. P. H. Turner, M.C. ; Captain and Q.M. R. Warner, mentioned in despatches ; Captain E. Whur, M.C., mentioned in despatches, White Eagle of Fifth Class awarded by King of Serbia ; Lieut. G. W. C. Williams, mentioned in despatches ; Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Wilmer, D.S.O., M.C., mentioned in despatches twice ; Captain A. M. Young, mentioned in despatches.

Private G. Barnard, M.M. ; Lance-Corporal C. Bayntun, mentioned in despatches ; Private H. Beer, M.M. ; Corporal C. C. Benning, M.M. ; Corporal W. Berry, mentioned in despatches ; Lance-Corporal T. H. Bird, Silver Medal awarded by King of Serbia ; Lance-Corporal W. Brand, M.M. ; Private A. T. Bryson, mentioned in despatches ; C.S.M. S. C. Clare, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; Private T. J. Connor, mentioned in despatches ; C.S.M. G. Davie, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; C.S.M. H. F. Doyle, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; Sergeant W. H. Draper, M.M. ; Private E. Greenaway, mentioned in despatches ; C.S.M. C. V. Hott, D.C.M. ; Private J. Jackson, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; Private F. Johnson, M.M. ; Private W. J. Keen, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; C.S.M. J. F. Knights, mentioned in despatches twice, D.C.M. ; Private G. A. Law, D.C.M. ; Lance-Corporal S. R. Leitch, M.M. ; C.S.M. W. J. Leslie, mentioned in despatches ; Corporal W. H. Lloyd, M.M. ; Private J. R. McIntee, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; Private G. E. Marjoram, M.M. ; Private F. W. Mason, M.M. and Bar ; Sergeant G. A. Nelson, M.M. ; Private J. J. Paine, M.M. ; Lance-Corporal W. Rogers, D.C.M., mentioned in despatches ; Private C. St. Clair, M.M. ; Corporal W. Seager, M.M. ; Private A. V. Smith, M.M. ; Signalling Sergeant E. V. Sparkes, mentioned in despatches ; Lance-

Sergeant J. C. Standing, M.M.; Sergeant T. Taylor, M.M.; R.Q.M.S. A. E. Thompson, M.S.M.; Private A. Weeks, Gold Medal awarded by King of Serbia; Sergeant A. A. Wood, mentioned in despatches.

161st MACHINE GUN COMPANY.*

Lieut. R. Barklie, M.C.; Lieut. J. N. Coker, M.C.; Major A. F. Harding, M.C.; Captain C. Needell, M.C.; 2nd Lieut. W. J. Shea, mentioned in despatches; Captain H. M. Taylor, M.C.; Major J. A. Walker, mentioned in despatches.

Sergeant J. E. Abbott, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant B. A. Collett, M.M.; Private E. C. Corby, M.M.; Sergeant B. E. Herbert, mentioned in despatches, Russian Gold Medal of St. George (2nd Class), D.C.M.; Private S. Horsnell, M.M. and Bar; Private G. F. Lipscombe, M.M.; Lance-Corporal A. R. Linsell, D.C.M.; Lance-Corporal G. H. Marshall, M.M.; Corporal F. A. Parker, M.M.; Private J. H. Peat, Serbian Gold Medal; Private J. E. Thompson, M.M.; C.S.M. J. E. Wand, mentioned in despatches; Private C. R. Warren, M.M.

54th MACHINE GUN BATTALION.

Lieut. A. Burkett, M.C.; Lieut.-Colonel G. F. A. Pigot-Moodie, M.C., mentioned in despatches; 2nd Lieut. W. J. Shea, mentioned in despatches.

Corporal A. W. Boon, M.M.; Lance-Corporal W. C. Burns, mentioned in despatches; Lance-Corporal S. G. Coe, D.C.M.; Sergeant G. W. Colenutt, M.M.; Sergeant T. R. Fletcher, mentioned in despatches; Sergeant S. G. Grice, D.C.M.; Private H. Kinder, M.M.; Sergeant T. Leadbetter, D.C.M.; Lance-Corporal H. Morris, D.C.M.; Private A. E. Myhill, M.M.; Lance-Corporal J. V. Pearce, M.M.; Lance-Corporal H. L. Perthen, mentioned in despatches; Private A. Richardson, Roumanian Medaille Barbatie si Credinta (2nd Class); C.Q.M.S. G. M. Talbot, mentioned in despatches.

*161st Machine Gun Company (161st Brigade, 54th Division) was formed in Egypt on 23rd April, 1916. On 19th April, 1918, the Company became part of 54th Machine Gun Battalion.

A list of those who fell in action, died of wounds or died of disease is given in the Roll which is deposited at the Essex Regiment Chapel, Warley, Essex.

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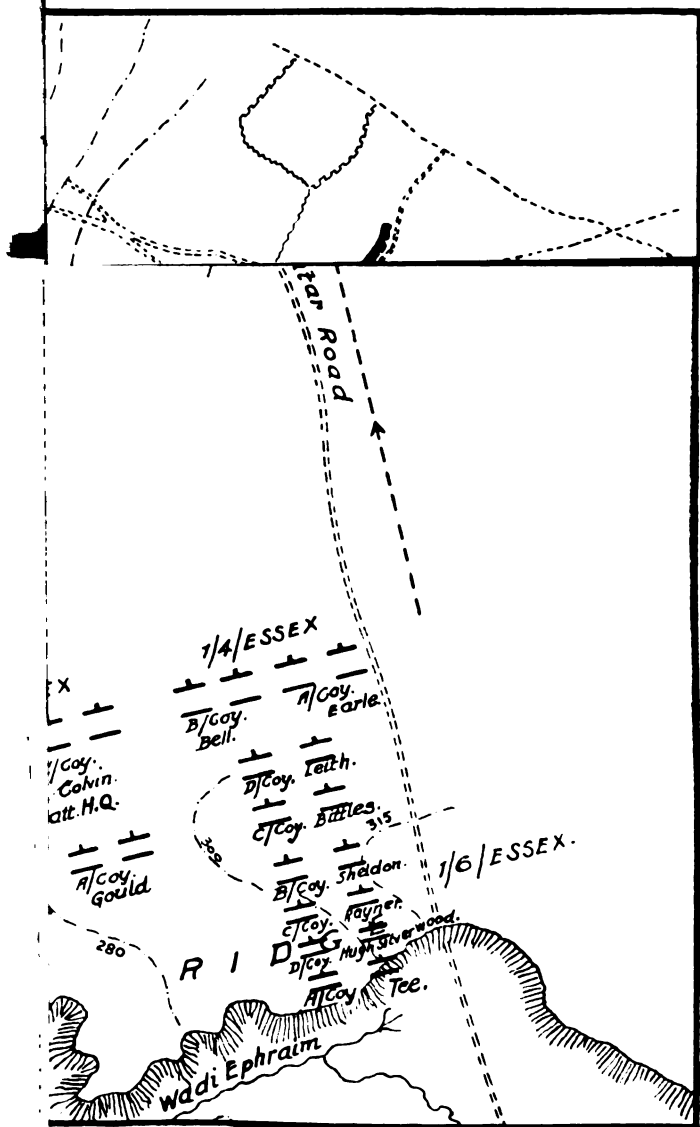
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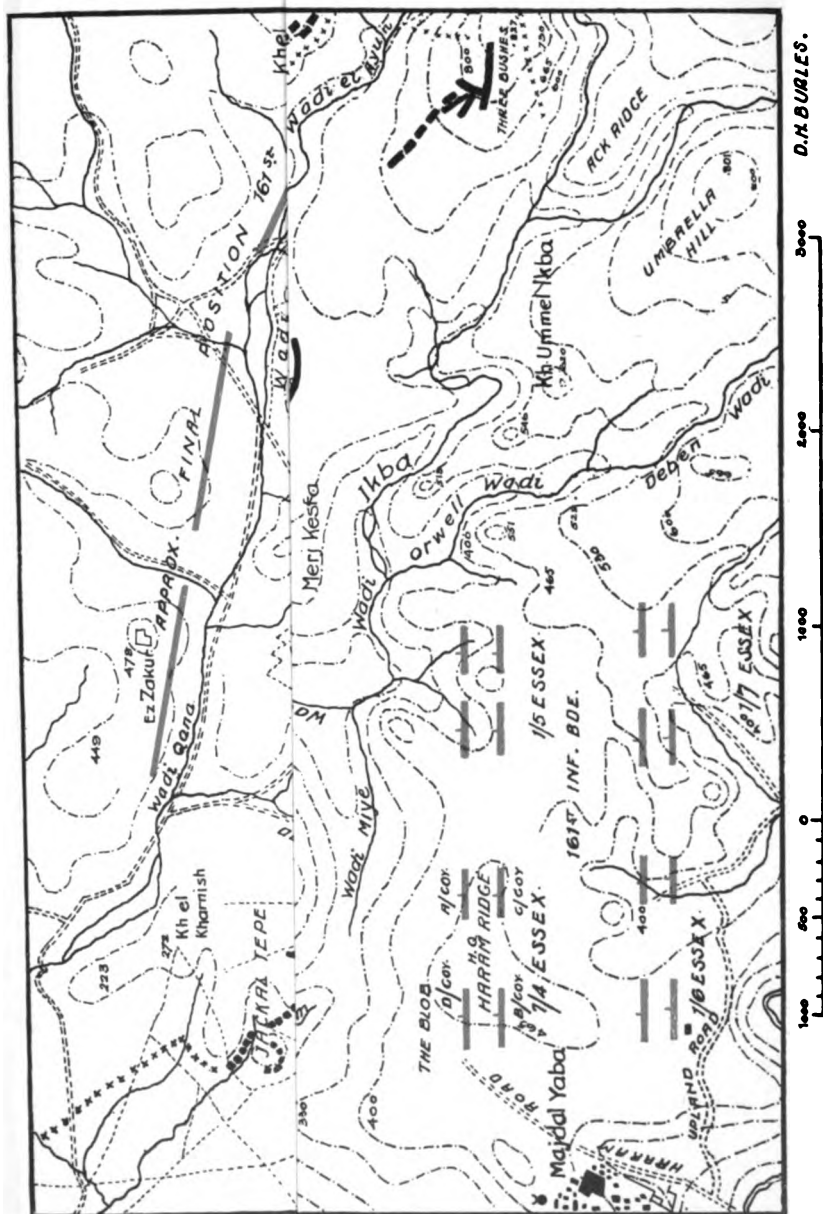
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SCALE OF YARDS.

THE LAST RATTLEFIELD, SEPTEMBER 1918.

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